



**MORE NATO GUNS MEAN A
LESS INDEPENDENT UKRAINE**

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**RESIST A WIDER WAR
HAS THE BRITISH S.A.S
ALREADY JOINED THE
FIGHTING? >>Page 5**

Socialist Worker

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**DON'T LET CORRUPT TORY LIAR
BORIS JOHNSON CLING ON AS...**

MILLIONS PUT INTO POVERTY

**●Prices soar as
Tories squeeze
pay and benefits**



**●5.3 million people
forced to choose
to heat or eat**

OUR HEALTH

**Long Covid—the
sickness the
Tories try to hide**

THE REALITY of Long Covid in Britain remains largely hidden—thanks mostly to a government that wants to behave as if the pandemic is over.

Socialist Worker speaks to people living with the illness who say the Tories' negligence makes the suffering much worse.

>>Pages 10&11

ELECTION



**France needs
a fightback
against fascists**

NEOLIBERAL Emmanuel Macron defeated the fascist Marine Le Pen in last Sunday's presidential vote.

But he's no block to the advance of the Nazis.

For the third time in 20 years, Le Pen's party was in the final round of voting and it's closer than ever to winning.

>>Pages 14&15

LIFE AT WORK

**Bosses threw away
my severed finger,
says factory worker**

VIRAJ KAKADIA lost the end of his finger at a Taiko sushi factory in west London on a machine he says was faulty, and without the proper protection.

He told Socialist Worker what happened and why workers need to organise.

>>Page 7



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'Sorry you were out when I visited. I look forward to seeing you in the office very soon. With every good wish, Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP'

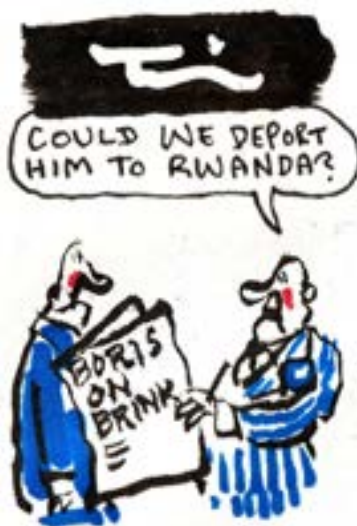
Notes left by the minister for feudalism on the desks of civil service workers working from home

'She knows she can't compete with Boris's Oxford Union debating training, but she has other skills which he lacks.'

Unnamed Tory MP to the Mail Online manages to be offensive in multiple ways at once about Labour deputy leader Angela Rayner

'They reached the same view and they have used the same words'

Tory spokesperson explains why Boris Johnson and Nadine Dorries both tweeted exactly the same words to distance themselves from the attacks on Rayner



Asda offers exceptional value for bosses as it pockets super profits

HOW'S THIS for profits? Asda's private equity co-owner has announced that its stake in the supermarket chain is worth 20 times the amount it paid last year.

Even the Financial Times newspaper says this is "an exceptional return enabled by the extensive financial engineering used in the takeover".

Investment fund TDR Capital and billionaire Blackburn-based brothers Mohsin and Zuber Issa used only a small amount of their own money in the £6.8 billion purchase of Asda.

They funded the rest by piling debt onto the supermarket chain and selling off some of its assets.

Now TDR has told investors that it has already marked its

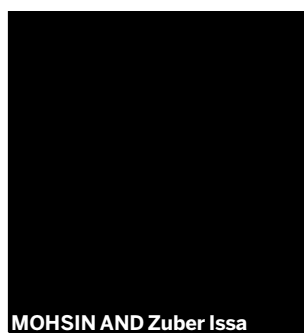
stake at 19.8 times its original investment and that it is worth £1.4 billion.

Where do all these profits come from?

It's not, you may be surprised to hear, the result of entrepreneurial brilliance from the very rich people at the top.

One method is to sell off the assets of the firm you take over. Asda bosses grabbed a big cash windfall soon after the takeover when they sold 27 warehouse properties with a book value of £497 million to Blackstone for £1.7 billion last year.

Another is to load up the debt. The takeover merchants borrowed around £3.8 billion for the initial purchase, with the money to be repaid through Asda revenues. They then borrowed another



MOHSIN AND Zuber Issa

£500 million last October. All of that, with interest, they will extract from the firm they have grabbed.

But the root of their gains is the exploitation of labour.

Without the sweat of store workers, warehouse workers, drivers and others there would not be a penny for the bosses. When private equity bosses take on a new company, they

look immediately to see how they can "cut costs".

In February Asda announced it was imposing a below-inflation pay rise of 3.25 percent on its 150,000 retail workers.

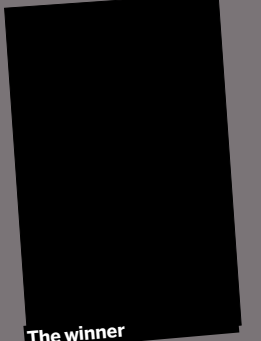
Until recently they earned just £9.66 an hour, well below the industry average. A GMB union campaign has shamed them into raising this to £10.10—still low pay.

But thousands of warehouse and admin workers face cuts to their sick pay and a real terms pay cut.

A GMB survey showed over half of Asda workers were forced to use payday lenders, foodbanks or borrow money from family and friends.

This is the other side of the "exceptional return" for the private equity wizards—and it's how capitalism works.

THE GOVERNMENT has announced important news. "As part of ongoing commemorations of the 30 years of relations between UK and Turkmenistan, the British Embassy held a competition to devise a recipe for a biscuit that incorporated ingredients from both countries. The winner? Ms Gulnabat Nepesova's recipe combined British favourites like carrot, cinnamon and oats, with Turkmen favourites like apricot and raisins. Her winning biscuits were given to all of the guests to take home with them to enjoy along with a cup of British tea!"



A RATHER embarrassing moment last week for British MPs on the foreign affairs committee. Their investigation into the undoubted wrongdoing of the Russian Wagner "private military company" heard evidence from Dr Sorch MacLeod, chair of the United Nations (UN) group on the use of mercenaries. MacLeod said there were only 37 states that had signed the UN convention on mercenaries, and added quickly, "The UK is not a party to that convention, before you ask." That saw some confusion among MPs. "The US?" asked Tory Alicia Kearns. "No," came the reply.

DWP slammed for claimants' deaths

THE EQUALITY and Human Rights Commission has ordered the government to reform its treatment of disabled and mentally distressed benefit claimants after a string of deaths.

It was responding to "serious concerns" about "failures" in the Department for Work of Pensions (DWP), including suicides.

MPs had asked the EHRC to investigate "the deaths of vulnerable claimants by suicide and other causes between 2008 and 2020".

The EHRC is now drawing up a legally-binding agreement for a DWP "action plan".

It will be "focused on resolving issues for DWP



HMS Bulwark—no fuel

customers, and offers a fast, effective means of redress, and helps to avoid lengthy investigations" the EHRC said.

It comes two years after an audit report revealed the government had investigated 69 benefit claimants' suicides since 2014, and could have investigated more.

Campaigners have spent years demanding an inquiry into the deaths of benefit claimants.

Thames water dumps raw sewage—again

THAMES WATER dumped untreated effluent for more than 68,000 hours into the river systems around Oxford last year, campaigners have revealed. They add that the amount of money the company plans to spend to improve the situation is woefully inadequate.

The company discharged raw sewage into the River Thames and its tributaries 5,028 times in 2021. That's according to data analysed by the Oxford Rivers Improvement Campaign.

It used data from Thames Water and applied

the Environment Agency formula for capacity required at any treatment works.

The campaigners assessed that the ten large sewage treatment works operating in the upper Thames area were unable to treat the full capacity of sewage for the population of 1.1 million.

The failure to invest in the capacity of the treatment works had led to more raw sewage in the rivers, the campaigners said. All 10 works discharged sewage into the rivers in 2021 for an average of 11 hours a week.

Do beers dream of electric bars?

THE US brewer Molson Coors ran an experiment last year. In a discreet building in downtown Los Angeles, 18 subjects were instructed to watch a strange video featuring a synth-laden soundtrack and natural imagery interspersed with glimpses of Coors Light cans.

The participants were then asked to sleep while listening to an eight-hour soundtrack featuring audio from the video.

Coors' stated goal was science-fiction worthy.

The company wanted to "shape and compel the subconscious" into dreaming about beer.

Around a third of the participants said Coors products made an appearance in their dreams. Coors isn't the only brand looking into dreams as ad space.

Microsoft has explored ways to make gamers dream of their favourite Xbox video games.

Burger King had a Halloween-themed burger in 2018 that it claimed was "clinically proven" to induce nightmares.

A recent survey run by The American Marketing Association, 77 percent of marketers said they had plans to use technology to influence dreams within the next 3 years.

Advertisers could, in theory, use smart speakers to market products to us in our sleep.

The technology to do this is nearly there. Google's Nest Hub, for instance, can measure your breathing during sleep and detect your coughs and snores.

Boris Johnson keeps digging

BORIS JOHNSON travelled more than 4,000 miles to India last week, despite a boiling crisis of his leadership—and managed to squeeze in a visit to a Tory donor's factory on his first day.

Johnson toured a new JCB facility in Vadodara, Gujarat, owned by Conservative peer Lord Bamford. JCB top boss Lord Bamford, his family and businesses have given some £14 million to the Tories since 2001.

Bamford, was pictured with Johnson at the factory.

Johnson was asked if he was embarrassed to visit the factory at a time when the firm was accused of supplying diggers to destroy Muslim homes in Delhi.

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Newsdesk
020 7840 5656
Circulation
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Write to
Socialist Worker
PO Box 74955
London
E16 9EJ

Woman fights energy bosses—‘I can’t pay’

by ISABEL RINGROSE

A WOMAN in Scarborough, North Yorkshire, has vowed to stop energy bosses hurling her deeper into poverty.

Bulb Energy told Sarah that her home would soon be installed with a prepaid energy meter. These charge a higher rate than other tariffs.

And they mean people “self disconnect” when they can’t afford to top up their supply. Sarah told the firm no—and is now being threatened with court orders.

“I’ve seen how much people have to put on their key for the meter,” she told Socialist Worker. “In the end it takes a lot out for debt, so you don’t get your full whack of electric—if you top up £30, you only get, say, £23.

“In October everything is going up again—it won’t be affordable. And I’m on Universal Credit (UC).”

Plucked

Sarah was given a £13,000 bill from Bulb last year. “They plucked that out of thin air, and I knew it wasn’t real,” she said. “They were very aggressive in their emails.

“So I’ve been fighting them for about a year, and when I got this latest letter I thought right, that’s it. I don’t need to be treated like this, so why would I put up with it?”

“They’re just picking on the little people. I think they bank on people not knowing what’s going on.”

Sarah explained that Bulb “is not getting into her home”—even if they have a court order.

She added that although her gas meter is outside her house, she will not have the electric meter inside the house changed.

PREPAYMENT METERS mean people ‘self-disconnect’ when they can’t afford to pay

“The letter had a lot of black bold and red writing. It was threatening in tone.

“It says they’re going to court for a warrant, and they’re coming in.

“It’s a bullying tactic,” she said.

Sarah hopes her resistance spreads. “This isn’t just affecting me. There are people where I’m living who have the same problem.

“It makes me sick. Especially when you think about how much energy giants make—it’s ridiculous.

“It’s not our fault when we’re cold and are living in damp conditions.

“The Tories are wiping out a whole level of people who are struggling. Their plan is just to make more and more money.”

Sarah slammed the Tories’ UC regime as “awful”. “I missed an appointment, and it cost me £75. That’s even less money for me to live on,” She said.

“It’s not really living, it’s surviving what the government does to you.

And it needs sorting out. The only way out of this is to fight back.

“I’m dreading it when next winter comes. I can’t pay even if I wanted to—I haven’t got any money. They can’t take what I haven’t got.”

It’s good that trade unions have called a national demonstration over the cost of living and other issues on 18 June in London. It has to be built everywhere. But we will need much more militancy to beat the Tories.

Sarah is a pseudonym

We are paying for company failings

BULB ENERGY is a failing business, but it’s ordinary people who are paying the price.

The gas and electricity provider has been using its £1.7 billion government bailout to pay millions in bonuses.

The company collapsed last November with 1.6 million customers, costing taxpayers some £2.2 billion by next year.

This is the biggest bailout since Royal Bank of Scotland in 2008.

It still operates on these funds while a buyer is being found, but top staff are still yet to leave the failing company.

Bonuses

Some £2 million has been paid in quarterly retention bonuses so far. This is to keep the company running and make it seem profitable to potential buyers.

Chief executive Hayden Wood is still grabbing the £250,000 salary he got before the company was bailed out.

So ordinary people pay more for their energy and at the same time are taxed to bail out failed privatisers and their fat cat bosses.

Bulb owed £254 million to customers who paid for gas and electricity in advance when it collapsed. It took months for it to be returned.

And other energy firms that “rescued” other failing companies have grabbed over £1.84 billion from energy regulator Ofgem to cover costs.

We’ll all be told to pay a £68 a year charge on bills to cover it.

The whole industry should be renationalised under democratic control to eliminate the profiteering.

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Build strikes to fight back

POST OFFICE workers are set to strike on Tuesday of next week over pay.

The strike comes after bosses offered just a 2 percent pay increase this year—well below inflation—following a wage freeze last year.

The CWU union says the strike will close every one of the 114 Crown Post Offices—the major Post Office branches—in Britain.

Workers voted to strike by 97 percent on a turnout of 70 percent in a ballot in March. The union also says more strikes will follow if bosses don’t back down.

And strikers at Chep UK are still balloting to extend their all out strike for the second time.

Supporters protested outside

Chep strikers

the British headquarters of the company Brambles Ltd that owns Chep last Wednesday.

Workers have been on picket lines for five months. The latest ballot closes next Thursday.

Workers are fighting back in the face of soaring living costs and stagnating pay.

Strikes are the way to hit back.

IN THIS WEEK

1986

Chernobyl nuclear disaster

On 1 May, Russian authorities released the first news report of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster

More guns and tanks means less independent Ukraine

by SAM ORD

BACK STORY

BRITAIN AND THE US are stepping up the war in Ukraine.

The extra push will mean even more weapons, even more integration of Ukraine into the Nato alliance—and even less independence for Ukraine itself.

Last Saturday Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky spoke to Boris Johnson, about a “new phase” of military aid, the president’s deputy chief of staff Andriy Sybiga said.

He added the latest assistance would include the provision of heavy weapons and added that the two had also talked about more money for Ukraine.

The next day two top US officials—Antony Blinken, US secretary of state, and Lloyd Austin, US defence secretary—flew to Ukraine to meet Zelensky in Kiev.

Austin said the US wants “to see Russia weakened to the degree it cannot do the kind of things that it has done in invading Ukraine”.

The Financial Times newspaper says that US strategy has changed and that “current and former US officials say that much of the caution of the war’s first phases has been all but discarded”.

It adds, “Nowhere has the shift in policy been more evident than in the weaponry the US has begun shipping to Ukrainian forces.

Expanded

“A month ago the US opposed a Polish scheme to supply MiG-29 fighter jets to the Ukrainian air force.

“Now it has pivoted, facilitating the supply of spare parts to Kiev to get 20 warplanes back in the air.

“It has also vastly expanded the range of heavy weaponry it is delivering into the fight.”

And it says, “Every day, eight to ten cargo flights, most of them operated by the US, land near the country’s western borders, carrying hundreds of millions of dollars worth of increasingly heavy weaponry”.

Britain, in order to step up the scale and scope of weaponry that Nato is providing, has promised to

Britain continues to pour more arms into Ukraine

● Boris Johnson promised £100million of military equipment to last week.

He said that Britain would send Ukraine 20 armoured vehicles, anti-ship missile systems and further economic support.

Foreign secretary Liz Truss said, “We agreed to help Ukrainian forces move from their Soviet-era equipment to Nato standard equipment”

replace tanks and heavy weapons supplied to Ukraine.

Britain and Germany told their Nato allies in eastern Europe, “You send tanks and heavy weapons to Ukraine, and we’ll send you new ones to fill the gap.”

This binds Ukraine closer to the Western orbit.

Revealed

Johnson said that he wanted to “backfill” supplies of Soviet-era T-72 tanks being provided by Poland to Ukraine. He also revealed plans for the West to provide “security guarantees” to Ukraine.

Britain, the US, France and Germany are leading the discussions about providing weaponry, training and intelligence in the long term.

This would be close to Nato membership, even if it is not formally agreed upon.

German defence minister Christine Lambrecht also announced a weapons deal. Germany will send Slovenia Marder tanks and Fox wheeled-tanks.

Slovenia is due to send a large number of T-72 tanks to Ukraine. In exchange, Germany will send Slovenia Marder tanks and Fox wheeled-tanks.

Lambrecht added that Germany would train Ukrainian forces to use German-made Panzerhaubitze 2000 heavy gunned tanks that the Netherlands is reportedly sending to Ukraine.

BORIS JOHNSON wants many more soldiers like the Nato troops he met in Estonia last month

Organise protests to hit back at the West’s escalation of the war

THE STOP the War Coalition in Britain and other organisations have called for an international day of action on Saturday 7 May.

Stop the war says, “We are calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops, an end to the military escalation by the Nato countries and a negotiated solution to this terrible war which risks nuclear escalation.

“We are asking all anti-war organisations, progressive groups and concerned individuals to organise protests, public meetings and petitioning sessions.”

It’s a chance to confidently take the message against invasion and escalation onto the streets. Campaigners should organise the biggest possible events on the day that show the anti-war message is not isolated.

Despite no encouragement—indeed hostility—from the Labour Party and some trade union leaders, millions of people feel no enthusiasm for a wider war.

They are fearful of moves that risk nuclear conflict. Such views need to be made public.

Campaigners in Scotland have given a lead by calling a national demonstration on the day. It will demand, “Russian troops out—no to Nato escalation,” and, “No nuclear war—scrap Trident”.

The Stop the War Coalition’s annual general meeting on Saturday saw around 150 people discuss the growing war moves and how to oppose them.

A resolution restating the position of opposition to both the Russian invasion and Nato expansion was passed by 119 to nine with ten abstentions. Two

other motions which included no criticism of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine were defeated with 24 votes for and around 100 against.

Socialist Worker supporters argued strongly for opposition to Nato, but also against the Russian invasion.

Stop the war and others have called for another day of action on 25 June, just before the Nato summit in Madrid, Spain.

Charlie Kimber

Glasgow demonstration, Sat 7 May, assemble Blythswood Square, 12 noon, for march to George Square for rally

British SAS troops are specialists in illegal military operations

Has Britain sent the SAS to be deployed in Ukraine?

RUSSIA is investigating whether Britain’s Special Air Service (SAS) sabotage experts have been deployed to western Ukraine.

Russia’s top state investigative body last Saturday said it was following up on a Russian media report alleging that the SAS had been sent to the western Lviv region. This is close to the border with Poland.

A Russian security source said that around 20 members of the SAS are operating in the country.

The alleged

presence of British special forces is significant. Putin warned Western nations not to intervene in the “special military operation” in Ukraine.

Ukrainian troops have admitted that they received training on how to operate anti-tank weapons from British troops.

But in an effort to stop this information from getting out, the Security Media Advisory (DSMA) Committee last week sent a notice to Socialist Worker and

other media outlets asking them not to print the story.

British military manoeuvres, despite being secretive, are fuelling the drive to war from both sides.

It is not clear how the Russian Investigative Committee—Moscow’s main federal investigating authority—will respond to any SAS involvement in Ukraine.

The retaliation may cause much more misery and death to innocent people.

China and India grab oil

THE LEADERS of the West are keen to portray the war in Ukraine as being Russia against the rest of the world.

But competitor nations are seeking to take advantage of US and European Union economic sanctions—especially on oil trading.

Eager to feed domestic industry, both India and China are scooping up as much oil as possible.

Chinese oil giants



Cnooc, CNPC and Sinopec were this week in negotiations to buy Shell’s £4 billion investment in Russian oil and gas.

The end result will

likely see China owning larger stakes in one of the world’s most oil and gas abundant nations.

India has in recent weeks aggressively ramped up its purchases of Russian oil.

Its government has ordered an additional 13 million barrels since late February.

The result is that Russia is already beating its own energy sales projections—despite sanctions.

‘Ghost drones’ to Donbas

THE PENTAGON said last week that the US Air Force has developed a new type of “ghost” drone for Ukrainian forces.

It’s known as the Phoenix Ghost and is part of yet another new £625 million weapons package.

“This was rapidly developed by the Air Force in response

specifically to Ukrainian requirements,” said a Pentagon spokesperson.

The drones are believed to be well suited for combat in Ukraine’s eastern Donbas region.

The Ukrainian military is also consulting with the giant US arms maker General Atomics to

receive MQ-9 Reaper drones. The drones cost about £25 million each, which the US government is expected to pay.

“With support from the US government, those aircraft could be in the hands of Ukrainian military pilots in a matter of days,”

a General Atomics spokesperson said.

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

HAMMER THE TORIES IN THE MAY ELECTIONS

BORIS Johnson is fearfully awaiting the verdict from the local elections across Britain next Thursday. Conservative MPs don’t mind his lies, corruption and lockdown law-breaking. But they will worry if it’s obvious he is an electoral liability.

Elections matter, but struggle in the streets and workplaces is more important than voting. That’s particularly true of these contests.

They mostly cover local councils where whichever party takes change meekly implements the cuts demanded by central government.

But if the Tories do well, Johnson and his acolytes will proclaim that he has escaped his multiple crises.

Our basic position in England and Wales is to vote Labour. This is not because we see Labour as the solution to any of the problems facing the working class.

Along with millions of others we see the failures of Labour in general—and Keir Starmer’s Labour in particular.

Starmer has spent his time as leader offering support to the core of Tory policy at key moments.

This includes over the pandemic, pushing for wider war in Ukraine, offering only token opposition to the assault on migrants and over protest rights.

But a Labour win can give campaigners and trade unionists more confidence. It can boost the fight against the social emergency of rising prices and the fall in the value of wages, benefits and pensions.

And Labour retains a residual connection, however withered and weak, with working class organisation through trade union leaders.

There will be some hundreds of candidates to the left of Labour, from organisations such as the

People’s Alliance of the Left. This is a grouping that includes the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, Left Unity, Breakthrough Party and the Northern Independence Party.

Where there are credible candidates from such groups, with a base in struggle and organisation, we hope people will vote for them.

But we don’t believe there can be a generalised left electoral challenge at this point. It’s harder when Labour is in opposition and the level of struggle is generally low.

In Scotland the balance of forces requires a different approach. The Scottish National Party (SNP) is dominant and Labour has made itself toxic to many people by its slavish support for the British state.

But the SNP offers no serious opposition to the Tories, refusing to use another crisis for Johnson to fight for independence. Here we say, “Vote Left, Fight for Independence.”

Whatever the results on 5 May the central task is to raise the level of struggle. We need more strikes, more mass protests, more defiance of disconnections and bailiffs, more anger on the streets and in the workplaces.

“Policy Exchange has completely ignored the vast body of critique from beyond the Muslim community. This underlines their open Islamophobic agenda.”

Home secretary Priti Patel is already poised to harden the strategy after she accused it of not being tough enough on Muslims.

Whichever loathsome ruling class version of the scheme wins out, more repression is coming.

Prevent instructs schools, NHS

and repeat’ of tired Islamophobic tropes, stereotypes and mischaracterisations.

“Policy Exchange has completely ignored the vast body of critique from beyond the Muslim community. This underlines their open Islamophobic agenda.”

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Prevent instructs schools, NHS

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Our new website brings together stories of struggles the mainstream won’t report. It helps you find socialist meetings, protests and strikes—and the Marxist ideas and activism to change the world.

ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Navigating arguments over imperialist war

GOING THROUGH a big imperialist war such as the present one is highly educational. It confirms, for example, that there is a ruling ideology. Notice, for example, how defenders of the war all use the same words. Russia is always a “kleptocracy”, or a “Mafia state”, as if this somehow justified the policy of the United States and its Nato allies.

The repetition of insults is also instructive. If you criticise Nato, you’re sure to be called a “Tanky”—a word originated to describe Stalinists who defended the Soviet Union’s military interventions against popular movements in Hungary, 1956 and Czechoslovakia, 1968.

The insult bounces off if—like members of the Socialist Workers Party—you belong to a political tendency founded in 1950 when the Cold War was taking off, on the slogan, “Neither Washington nor Moscow, but International Socialism.”

In fact the best critics of the present war have strong anti-Stalinist credentials. The New Left Review journal didn’t take exactly the same line on the Cold War as we did. But it always supported the left’s opposition to the Stalinist regime.

It has maintained this critical stance towards Vladimir Putin’s regime. I’ve been reading two books published by Verso. Tony Wood’s *Russia without Putin* seeks to undermine the idea that everything in Russia springs from Putin’s malevolent personality.

He argues that Russia is in many ways a “normal” neoliberal society. Dissidents among Dissidents is a collection of essays by the Russian socialist writer and activist Ilya Budraitskis. They are especially good at dissecting the authoritarian Russian nationalist ideology that Putin is using to justify the invasion.

Fascinating

Budraitskis also has a long and fascinating essay reconstructing the history of the plethora of Marxist opposition groups that developed under the Stalinist regime from the 1950s onwards. They were all crushed by the KGB.

Putin served in the KGB, so his anti-Marxism goes back a long way.

The same critical Marxist approach informs the new special double issue of the New Left Review. It is dominated by three articles on Ukraine.

Wood is one of the contributors, building on the analysis in his book he says, “The Kremlin bears the responsibility for unleashing this war, and regardless of the outcome will carry a heavy moral burden for the destruction it has already caused... But justifiable outrage and the immediate demands of solidarity with Ukrainians should not be allowed to shut out larger questions of historical responsibility.

“As the most powerful bloc in a decades-long geopolitical contest over Ukraine, the US and its Nato allies necessarily played a role in shaping the context for the invasion... Any analysis that confines itself to Russia’s actions alone, or that looks no further than the inside of Putin’s head, is at best a one-sided delusion, and at worst wilfully distorts the facts.”

The theme of the responsibility of the US and its allies in ruthlessly exploiting Russia’s weakness after the collapse of the Soviet Union and expanding Nato eastwards, is further developed by New Left Review editor, Susan Watkins. She quotes Leon Panetta, director of the Central Intelligence Agency under Barack Obama, “It’s a proxy war with Russia, whether we say so or not.”

Finally, a fascinating interview with the left-wing Ukrainian sociologist Volodymyr Ishchenko traces how, after the “Euromaidan” protests in Kyiv in 2013-14, the demands of the far right to institutionalise a harder, more anti-Russian nationalism were taken up by “the broader bloc of national-liberal civil society”.

“Demands that before the Euromaidan were seen as very radical suddenly became universalised, at least on the level of what we might call the activist public, although they were often not actually supported by the majority of society.”

Successive presidents, Petro Poroshenko and Volodymyr Zelensky, whose election was a defeat for the “national-liberal” bloc, caved in to them.

Now this bubble of nationalism has collided with Putin’s attempt to reassert Russian imperial power.

Marxist analysis like that in New Left Review and Socialist Worker and International Socialism is needed to help us navigate the resulting horrors.

EXTINCTION REBELLION activists block Wall Street in New York

Climate protests across the world demand radical action

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

EXTINCTION Rebellion (XR) groups worldwide last week engaged in actions to save the planet from climate crisis.

Rebels in New York blocked the printing facilities of several major newspapers, including The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times.

The action, which coincided with Earth Day, saw rebels assemble tall bamboo structures and block printing plant entrances.

In a statement XR New York wrote, “We stand behind the right to free speech and a free press, and view the breaking of certain concrete mundane laws as a public plea for societal change.

“The climate and ecological crisis is already here—destroying people’s homes and livelihoods with extreme weather, droughts, and fire. Yet governments and corporations, influenced by mass media corporations, are complacent by continuing to ignore the root causes of the crisis and the dire situation humanity is facing.”

They also attacked media outlets such as The New York Times for burying climate stories and continuing to provide ad space for fossil fuel companies.

The group unfurled a

banner that read, “Break up with Exxon.” The group managed to cause delays in the paper’s distribution.

Bosses had to email subscribers saying their paper would be delivered a day late.

The police arrested 15 activists in total for their part in the protests. Elsewhere in the city, activists blocked major roads holding signs that read, “Climate justice is social justice.”

Activists in other parts of the world also took part in direct action on Earth Day.

In Frankfurt, Germany, XR activists glued themselves to roads and blocked bridges.

Student activists in Uganda,

east Africa, blocked roads and organised several marches.

In Switzerland members of the climate group Renovate Switzerland blocked traffic on a major motorway.

The group is demanding the government takes action to renovate homes to be more energy-efficient.

Members of XR joined with school strikers in Australia to blockade the world’s largest coal port using kayaks.

Rebels said they wanted, “A shift to funding climate solutions including a transition for local coal workers and communities.”

School student Emily Ashton who took part in the protest said, “Scott Morrison’s government has given billions of dollars to fossil fuel companies, selling out the future for all young Australians.

“Billions for fossil fuels is not a climate plan.”

In Durban, South Africa, activists rallied outside the headquarters of Standard Chartered bank to stop the construction of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline.

XR groups in Sweden kicked off their latest five-day rebellion on Monday by blocking roads outside government buildings.

While governments worldwide sit on their hands as the world burns, hundreds of activists are escalating action trying to save the planet.

Renovate Switzerland protest

‘Insect apocalypse’ warning

A NEW study has found that the climate crisis is leading to insect populations dropping by as much as 49 percent in some parts of the world.

It also found that unsustainable agricultural practices and habitat loss made worse by climate change are leading to what some call an “insect apocalypse”. Insects are a vital part of our ecosystems.

They pollinate plants that feed us and make soil more fertile.

Failing to conserve insect populations could potentially lead to failed crops and food shortages.

Peter McCann, a researcher for the study, said, “We need to acknowledge how important insects are for the environment in order to address the threats we pose to them.”

Bosses threw away severed finger, says factory worker

Nick Clark speaks to a food factory worker in West London who says that he is a victim of his bosses' approach to workers' safety and of the wider culture that always puts profits first

A FOOD factory worker is speaking out and getting his workplace organised after bosses threw his severed fingertip in the bin.

Viraj Kakadia lost the end of his finger at a Taiko sushi factory in west London on a machine he says was faulty, and without the proper protective gloves.

But when he went to tell his bosses he says that instead of calling an ambulance, they made him fill out a form—and book a taxi himself.

"I was working on a slicing machine—but it didn't have a safety sensor and there had been a breakdown every day," Viraj told Socialist Worker.

"There were no metal gloves available, only cotton ones," he added. "There are two slicing machines, but only one pair of metal gloves.

Company

"My finger got caught inside and it was cut. For 15 or 20 minutes I filled out a form while I kept bleeding—too much blood. But the company didn't call an ambulance.

"They told me to book a taxi or an Uber and go to the hospital. My friend had to help me book the taxi. The company didn't even provide that."

If that wasn't bad enough, when doctors asked Viraj if he still had his finger so they could reattach it, he



VIRAJ RECEIVES medical attention to his injured finger

found bosses had thrown it away. And his ordeal didn't end there.

Doctors told Viraj he needed four or five weeks bed rest. But Taiko bosses said if he wanted to stay off on full pay, he'd need to book

a holiday. "I asked how much sick pay is a week and they told me it's only £100," said Viraj.

"But my family lives here, my wife is a student. £100 is not enough. I cut my finger at work, not at home."

After just two weeks off, Viraj returned to work. Bosses offered him lighter duties, but only if he took night shifts at first.

And GMB union organiser Hiten Vaidya says they tried to encourage

him back to his normal job while what remained of his finger was still swollen and hurt.

After Viraj's story first appeared in the press, Taiko said it would restore his holiday pay, and insisted the machines were safe, with proper protection.

"They removed the machine straight away after the accident," said Hiten. "That proves it was a defective machine. They also straight away started to provide proper metal gloves."

Bosses also invited Viraj to a meeting to ask if he was happy with his pay.

But for Viraj, the problem is the way bosses seemingly played fast and loose with workers' safety.

"Management called me to the office and asked me if I wanted to say anything," said Viraj. "I said yes, why didn't you call an ambulance?"

"Before my accident there were two or three accidents and they didn't call an ambulance, only a taxi. If they had called an ambulance I would have got treatment immediately.

"This is going to be a problem for the rest of my life. My life was like a game to them."

On other pages...
Take no pride in Britain's brutal immigration history >>Page 17

Working in harsh conditions without the protection they need

VIRAJ'S STORY lifts the lid on life in a factory where work is long, hard and often dangerous.

He and a workmate describe spending hours at a time, standing in near freezing conditions—and, they say, without proper warm, protective clothing.

It's an insight into the work that puts food on supermarket shelves.

"We work six days a week, eight hours a day, starting at 7am," said Viraj. "Inside, the temperature is two or three degrees. You work eight hours, ten hours, 12 hours, only standing up."

"It's very cold," his friend added. "They only give you a normal white coat. The product is like ice. Your hands are freezing and swelling.

Even if you ask to go and warm your hands, they can refuse that.

"They even penalise people for going to the toilet because you need to remove your white coat every time."

GMB union organiser Hiten Vaidya says other workers at Taiko report the same.

"They work in cold conditions, but they have not been provided with proper personal protective equipment (PPE). Not even a fleece," he said.

"When you walk into a chiller you should have a fleece, proper shoes, a body warmer. But the company hasn't been providing these. Even for people who handle the frozen meats.

"People show me the



Viraj says his injury will affect him for the rest of his life

state of their fingers because they're not provided with the right cotton gloves to handle frozen foods."

Viraj and his friend also say that, in a

factory where most of the workforce speak English as a second language, they miss out on vital safety training.

"They came to me with a piece of paper

and said sign here to say that you've had training and you can work the machine," said Viraj's friend.

"The main problem was it's in English—and my first language is not English."

Hiten explained, "When I asked Viraj who provided him with training, he said an English woman. I asked, did they provide you training in your own language? He said no—they just asked me to sign this paper, and he signed."

In these conditions, it's no wonder accidents happen, says Hiten.

"When people work without proper PPE, when they work for six days, when they only get one break, in cold temperatures, people are

going sick," he said.

"All this combines one day to something like Viraj's accident. I'm still convinced Viraj's accident was avoidable."

A Taiko spokesperson said, "We provide each employee with thorough training and a full supply of PPE, and we ensure that all machinery is well-maintained and has the correct safety features in place."

Hiten says conditions are better where the GMB organises. That's why he and Viraj are encouraging others to join. Viraj said, "After my story, lots of people have told me they're joining GMB. It's great."

"It's about standing up for his rights," added Hiten.

Big powers are false friends of Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan protesters must not be divided over false support offers from India and China, explains Yuri Prasad

WHILE CRISIS continues to grip Sri Lanka, the region's big rivals—India and China—are hoping to outdo each other with offers of “help”.

Huge protests again gripped most of the island's towns last week. Farmers, bank workers and doctors were all in the streets to demand an end to the regime of Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his band of exploiting brothers.

Rajapaksa's dash for economic growth by massive government borrowing and cutting taxes for the rich spectacularly backfired during the pandemic. Now ordinary people are paying the price.

Months of lengthy electricity blackouts have been followed by shortages of food, fuel, medicines and other essentials. Hospital doctors have stopped all routine surgery to conserve supplies for emergencies only.

Farmers are effectively banned from using fertilisers and crop yields have been slashed.

Even former cabinet ministers are demanding the fall of the government after police shot and killed a protester last week.

But there is now a global battle between states and institutions that insist they want to “help” Sri Lanka out of its economic disaster.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are circling the island.

They want to further “liberalise” the economy by cutting food and fuel subsidies that benefit the poorest. The plans would also see the price of basic goods rocket further.

But any “stabilisation loans” would affect the main country's creditors, particularly India and China. China has stepped in with a relatively modest offer.

It is prepared to lend £24 million in urgent emergency aid, including rice, pharmaceuticals and other vital goods.

It has already lent the Sri Lankan government over £1 billion during the pandemic.

If the Sri Lankan economy were to drop further, China's rulers will

likely attempt to exchange their debts for increased ownership of the state and its assets.

Establishing a friendly government, if heavily indebted and partially-owned, in the Indian Ocean has long been one of its strategic objectives.

It has already financed the building of Hambantota international port and was recently cleared to start work on the Colombo Port City. Sri Lankan authorities hope that this will be a South Asian equivalent of Dubai.

For its part, Indian firms have also been pouring in cash.

Earlier this year the Adani Group signed an agreement to build a new container terminal right next to the Chinese-run one in Colombo.

Now the Indian government is offering to hook up Sri Lanka to its own electricity grid by running a cable under the ocean to the island.

India and China want to pull Sri Lanka deeper into a “debt trap” that will force the country into their strategic orbit for generations.

Those protesting on the streets should not be fooled by these offers, nor those from the IMF.

The hope for workers and the poor striving to survive is to stay on the streets, build strikes, and defy any attempts to divide them.

Protesters want Rajapaksa out

Palestine



OUTSIDE THE Israeli embassy in London demanding freedom for Palestine

Protesters in London rage against more Israeli violence in Jerusalem

by NICK CLARK

HUNDREDS OF people protested outside Israel's embassy in central London last Friday, after a week of Israeli raids on Palestinian worshippers in occupied Jerusalem. The protest, called by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, demanded that Britain stops selling arms to Israel.

Heavily armed Israeli cops stormed the Al Aqsa mosque in east Jerusalem last Friday morning, injuring 30 Palestinians there. They fired stun grenades and rubber-coated steel bullets at Palestinians, who fought back with rocks.

It was the latest raid on the mosque this week, as hundreds of Palestinians gather to pray during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

As protesters and speakers at the demonstration pointed out, the attacks on Palestinians are just the latest in a decades-long campaign by Israel to drive Palestinians out of the city. Israel says the raids were meant to ensure that Jewish worshippers—who also

consider the site holy—could enter during the Passover holiday.

They, and many media reports in Britain, want to present the fighting as an issue of Palestinian Muslims' hostility to Israeli Jews.

“This happens a lot at Ramadan,” protester Hafsa told Socialist Worker. “That's not a coincidence. Israel attacks when they know there's going to be a lot of Palestinians at Al Aqsa.”

Peace

She added, “The number of Palestinians living in the area has been falling. I've been to Palestine twice and I've seen that Israelis and Palestinians can live together in peace.”

“But Israel wants more and more of the country and the land and it keeps pushing Palestinians out. This has been going on for around 70 years—but thanks to social media more people are becoming aware of it now.”

Other speakers and protesters pointed to Britain's support for Israel—and its hypocrisy in condemning Palestinian resistance. A

speaker from the Palestinian Forum in Britain said, “The British government offers unconditional support to those in Ukraine, which it should do, while ignoring the oppression of others all over the world.”

“The same colonial body that handed our land to a coloniser lectures us about right and wrong. The same colonial body seeks to silence us in universities.”

And Palestinian ambassador to Britain Husam Zomlot led protesters in chants of “double standards” and “hypocrisy.”

Many of the protesters and speakers remembered huge solidarity demonstrations last year when Israel's assaults in Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip sparked an uprising across Palestine.

Protester Mohammed told Socialist Worker, “I'm here to protest against the Israeli occupation, the war crimes and the injustice. We need to protest, we put pressure on Israel last year.”

National demonstration—End Apartheid, Free Palestine. Sat 14 May, assemble 12 noon, Portland Place, Central London (Oxford Circus tube). For full details go to palestinecampaign.org

Fight for a green curriculum

AS A teachers I welcome the news that there will be a new GCSE that teaches about the natural world and supposedly about how to conserve the planet.

It shows that the climate movement has forced those in power to listen.

But on closer inspection the new GCSE mainly teaches about the wonders of nature.

It doesn't address the urgent need to fight against ecological breakdown.

Teaching about the environment shouldn't just be sidelined to a few subjects such as citizenship, science or geography.

Climate education needs to be taught throughout the curriculum, from science to music and art.

And it should be a campaigning subject that teaches students how to fight back.

We fought for an equalities agenda that goes right through the curriculum, and it should be the same with the climate.

Because schools are the centres of communities, they should also be transformed into hubs for sustainability.

This is the vision for education that we must fight for, which is much more than the Tories have offered.

The chief Ofsted inspector, Amanda Spielman, has said in the past that climate protests are disruptive to education. But she is wrong.

Students have put climate firmly onto the agenda, and I look forward to marching and striking with them again.

Simon Shaw
Newham

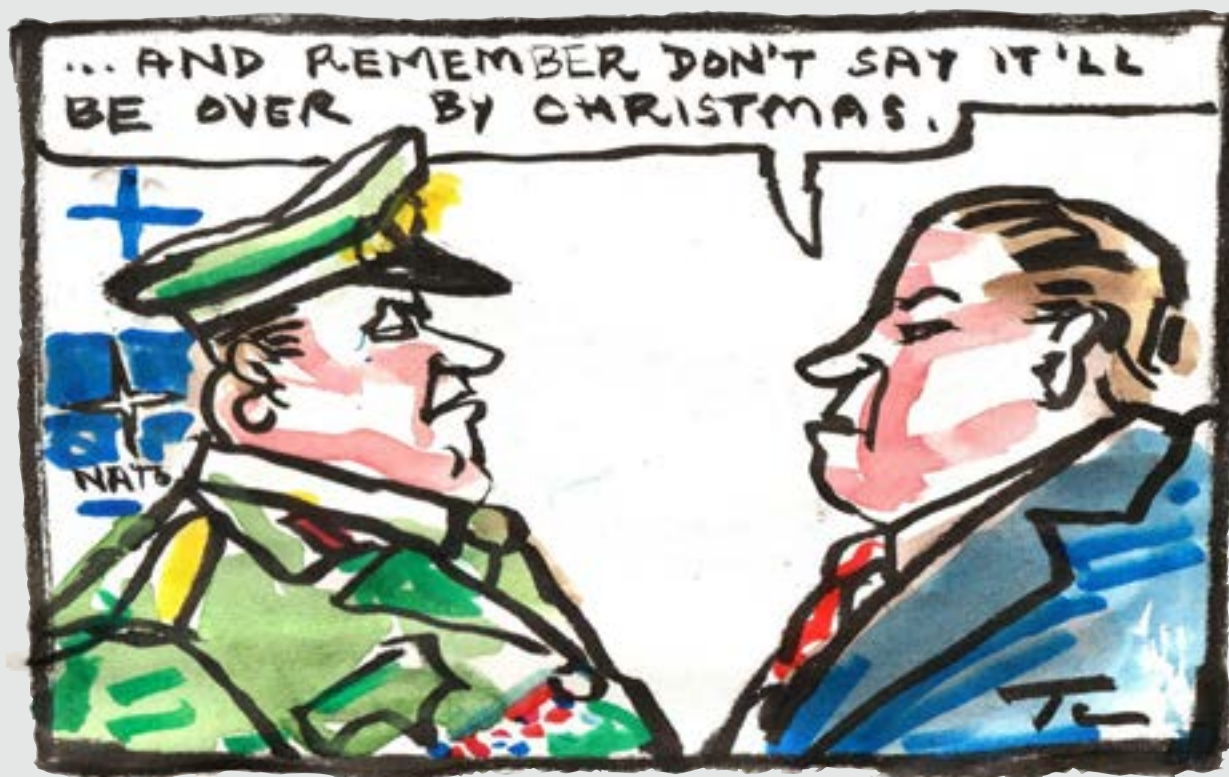


ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Don't let the right attack Palestine campus activism

STUDENTS MUST stand against right wing attacks on those who criticise the Israeli state.

This month 21 former presidents of the NUS union wrote a letter to the organisation's trustees urging them to take the concerns of Jewish students seriously. Signatories included the Labour shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting.

The letter says that the signatories want to protect the anti-racist principles of the student union, but this isn't true.

Anti-racist rapper Lowkey was also attacked and pushed to drop out of the union's centenary event.

I think we need to be clear about what these attacks mean. Once again, claims of antisemitism

are being weaponised to silence any dissent.

Pointing out the state violence that the Israeli state metes out to Palestinians is considered dangerous or radical.

And it's no coincidence that with Shaima Dallali taking the reins as president of the NUS, the cries of antisemitism have risen once more.

As a Muslim woman who has been vocal about Palestinian rights in the past, she has been attacked for showing solidarity with the oppressed.

Old tweets that she made when she was only a teenager have been cynically dug up, and she has been made to apologise.

The irony that she has been

targeted with such vitriol, with claims of racism, should not be lost on us. But the right, of course, stay silent on the attacks because it is convenient for them.

Why do these attacks against Palestinian activists continue? We must see this for what it truly is—an attempt to divide people and to crush dissent.

And it is part of a broader attack on Palestine activism, especially in universities.

As socialists, we must not act only when it is convenient and easy.

We must organise on our campuses to ensure that Palestine activism isn't crushed by the right.

Richard Gregory
Glasgow

The Deliveroo foodbank partnership is hypocrisy

DELIVERY APP Deliveroo is partnering with foodbank charity the Trussell Trust.

The announcement comes at a time when one in ten parents are very likely to have to use a food bank in the next three months.

But this move by Deliveroo is just totally hypocritical.

The company is based on the exact zero hour contracts and low pay that plunge people into poverty and drive them to use food banks.

Drivers can earn as little as £2 an hour, and that's one of the reasons delivery drivers have been on strike many times.

Let's see Deliveroo start paying its workers enough to actually feed themselves and have some dignity before doing shiny stunts to improve its public image.

Workers must unionise and strike to win fair pay and pressure the bosses into real action.

Samira Ali
Liverpool

Calories on menus won't end obesity

THE TORIES' latest stand against obesity has seen them introduce new legislation that would add calories to all menus in restaurants and cafes.

While the obesity crisis is undoubtedly pressing, introducing calories onto menus will do very little to actually help.

And for many it could do more harm than good.

Those who have active eating disorders or are recovering often find counting calories to be a barrier to them getting better. New menus may

mean the difference between some choosing what they want to eat and what has the least calories.

And new legislation does nothing to tackle what's really causing obesity— austerity, low pay, long hours and stress.



Dining out

With food prices going up, especially on basics, poor people are presented with little choice about what they eat. Because of the stagnation of wages and rising inflation, people are likely to rely on fast and convenient food options.

These are often low in nutrition and high in fat.

So the problem of rising obesity won't be solved by calories on menus.

Instead it will be solved by transforming the system altogether.

Naima Omar
Tower Hamlets

Just a thought...

Don't forget British Gas

IT'S BEEN a year since hundreds of British Gas workers lost their jobs due to the bosses' brutal fire and rehire plot.

We should never forget how hard strikers fought and voted in large numbers for escalation.

We must also say that they were severely let down by the leadership of the GMB union, who didn't back them wholly.

The assault on them gave the bosses the green light to come back with even more brutal attacks, which only more action and strikes can combat.

Henry Symonds
Leicester

Johnson one of bad bunch

BORIS Johnson's transgressions are so obvious and criminal in nature. So we might forget that his two predecessors were equally as destructive to all that was good and worthwhile.

Essentially, Tory Johnson is the logical progression to absolute corruption.

Leslie Bridges
On Facebook

Asda workers deserve more

AFTER reading Socialist Worker's article on supermarket Asda making bumper profits, I want to say that the money is there.

Tesco awarded its staff big bonuses, didn't they?

Asda should do the same and increase wages to at least match the rate of inflation.

Linda Jones
On Facebook

Refuse workers must now unite

FROM WHAT I've been seeing refuse workers across Britain have been striking for better pay and conditions.

It seems to me that these essential workers have a lot of leverage and power to get their demands met.

Uniting these strikes nationally could force councils and outsourcers to hand over the pay they deserve.

Julian
Nottingham

LONG COVID

A WAVE OF SICKNESS THE TORIES WANT TO HIDE

The reality of Long Covid in Britain remains largely hidden—thanks mostly to a government that wants to behave as if the pandemic is over. **Yuri Prasad** speaks to people living with the illness—and says the Tories’ negligence makes people’s suffering much worse

WHEN LUCY returned to work after catching Covid in March 2020 she found the virus had taken a much heavier toll on her than she realised.

A teacher for more than 20 years, she was used to writing long, detailed reports and firing off dozens of emails every day. But suddenly that had become a great struggle.

“I was off work for six weeks with Covid, but I was still unwell when I went back,” she told Socialist Worker.

“I found that I simply could not remember how to do my job. Not only that, but I couldn’t even write in proper sentences.

“Teaching people to do this is what I do for a living, and yet I found myself struggling to put words together.”

When Lucy looks back at notes she wrote at the time she says they are “barely intelligible”—just a “tangle of unfinished sentences”.

“Brain fog” or neurocognitive impairment is one of many symptoms of long Covid. Lucy is one of an estimated 1.7 million people in Britain that currently have it. The numbers continue to grow with each new strain of the virus.

Many of those people have only recently been infected with the coronavirus, but approaching half have had symptoms for more than a year. Some 74,000 people, including Lucy, are still suffering from some symptoms at least two years later.

The most common signs of long Covid are fatigue, a loss of energy so profound

that many struggle to walk and do even basic household jobs. Shortness of breath and muscle aches fall not far behind.

While only a minority find themselves struggling to think, the effects for them can be life changing.

Family doctor Kerry Smith explained why she is unable to return to her job.

“The thing that’s really preventing me from going back to work is my cognitive issues or brain fog. Ummm [silence] Sorry, sorry, that’s it, you see, I lose my train of thought,” she told the Medical News Today website.

“That’s the problem. With my brain fog, I have problems concentrating, keeping up with conversations, multitasking. I lose my train of thought easily. And I have difficulties with my memory.”

Unsurprisingly, it’s those people who were in the frontline of the pandemic that have suffered the most. Those working in social care, teaching and healthcare are at particular risk.



My mum had dementia so I thought that this might be the onset of it for me



Lung damage caused by long Covid requires constant follow up testing

Long Covid is highest among people between the ages of 35 and 49 years old, among women, and people living in deprived areas.

That’s according to figures from the Office of National Statistics. Its survey relied on people self-reporting symptoms and illness—so the true figure could be higher than currently reported.

Infection

Dr Smith’s problems are familiar to south London health worker Maggie who returned to work quickly after an initial infection in March 2020.

“Long Covid affected my writing and my speech. I could only manage one sentence at a time,” she explained to Socialist Worker.

“But there was no mention of anything like this in the NHS list of symptoms, so

I didn’t go to my doctor and just tried to manage things myself.

“I was having to write myself lots of notes so as not to lose my train of thought. It was a very frightening time.

“My mum had dementia so I thought that this might be the onset of it for me. I thought this is now a permanent condition.”

Repeated

After a month Maggie’s symptoms started to improve but in September 2021 she caught Covid again and was this time hit far harder. Since then she has suffered repeated viruses that have attacked her lungs.

“The lack of information about long Covid, what it is, and how to treat it is really frustrating,” she said. “But it’s the lack of recognition that’s the worst—and that’s because the government has decided Covid is over.”

The government’s mantra “we must live with the virus” affects all spheres of long Covid. From research into its complexities, possible treatments—and what happens to those who need help to continue working, or who cannot now work at all.

For the Tories, acknowledging the scale of long Covid and its impacts would be an admission that ending all safety measures and most testing is disastrous.

“It’s the people who are suffering with long Covid that have pushed hardest for more research and better treatment,” said Lucy.

“We are fighting a government that wants to deny its existence, or pretend that after the vaccination Covid is just a mild disease.”

Shut out of clinics and from benefits

DESPITE THE shockingly high incidence of the disease only 5,000 people a month in England are being referred to specialist long Covid clinics, according to NHS figures. One third of those referred are having to wait at least 15 weeks for their first appointment.

Many patients then report having to wait between three and six months for follow up treatment.

During that time they must try to fend for themselves, with many doing their own internet research and joining online support groups.

The benefits system is also failing those struggling with daily tasks.

Latest figures show that as of January just 937 people with the condition had successfully claimed the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) benefit. This pays out a paltry £150 a week.

The benefits assessment system deliberately tries to catch people out by asking potential claimants whether they can perform a particular task. But the forms don’t assess what toll that task takes on the applicant, and if they could repeat it more than once on the same day.

So people who say they can walk a certain number of metres are rejected, even if they can only manage that length once a day, or even once a week.



The state makes applying for disability benefits especially hard for people with long Covid

And despite the huge numbers of people affected by long Covid, just 1,584 of them have been assessed by the PIP programme.

Equality laws say that a disease must have a “substantial and long-term impact” for it to qualify as a disability. Long term is usually taken to mean 12 months or more.

Bullying

That long time period has been a get out clause for the Department for Work and Pensions, and a great excuse for bullying bosses.

A recent survey by the TUC union grouping found that almost half of workers with long Covid

had suffered discrimination or disadvantage in employment. Nearly a fifth were faced with disbelief and suspicion about their illness.

Around one in six respondents said the amount of sick leave they had taken had triggered an “absence management or ‘Human Resources’ process”. One in eleven had used all their sick leave, and one in 20 had been forced out of their job.

Many report that normal sickness policies were suspended during the height of the pandemic. But they say since the Tories ended all restrictions, Covid-related absence is once again being treated as though it were just a “normal” flu.

‘Get back to the office’

SINCE THE start of the pandemic, some 200,000 people are not working or job-seeking because of long-term ill health. Long Covid and employers’ intransigence are likely factors in why that is.

Despite this, many bosses and their politician backers are still pushing for a “rapid return” to the office.

Tory toad Jacob Rees-Mogg last week demanded that civil service workers be prevented from working at home.

In a letter to ministers, he wrote, “Now that we are learning to live with Covid and have lifted all legal restrictions in England, we must continue to accelerate the return of civil servants to office buildings to realise the benefits of face-to-face, collaborative working and the wider benefits for the economy.”

This is a trade union issue

LONG COVID will continue to affect hundreds of thousands of workers. It’s vital that our trade unions mount a serious campaign to win a better deal for those affected.

That should include a fight to change the law so that long Covid is specified as a disability. That would push employers to make “reasonable adjustments” to the working conditions of those with the disease.

But what will likely have more impact is if unions can force a change to company and organisation sickness policies.

Many firms will allow staff that have been seriously ill to have a “phased return.” That means staggering how recovering staff come back to work, rather than immediately resuming full time hours.

Long Covid requires a much more flexible policy than the usual four weeks allowed. It should mean that staff can come into work but leave if they feel unwell, without fear of disciplinary action. The length of the phased return should not be restricted to any time limit.

It should also include paid time off for physiotherapy and other treatments, extra breaks during work time, and physical changes to the workplace.

Employers must accept that many people caught Covid while at work—and because firms provided inadequate protective equipment. So they should pay industrial injuries benefits to workers with long Covid.

There must also be pressure on the government to increase and expand statutory sick pay. Everyone who has to take time off work should have enough money to live on.

Unions will only have a chance of implementing these types of measures if they can demonstrate strength on the shop floor. It is unlikely to be won by force of argument alone.

That means the fight for better sickness policies should be combined with the fight for a decent standard of living.

Just as every worker in Britain needs a pay rise, so they need better protection if they fall ill.

Children can also be affected by long Covid

SCHOOLS ARE known to be dangerous incubators of infections, including Covid. But it’s not just teachers that have been getting sick with long Covid.

While comparatively rare, a growing number of children are suffering from long Covid-type symptoms. Many have been diagnosed with paediatric inflammatory multisystem syndrome, known as Pims.

The long Covid kids’ website has a page with pictures of young people holding signs detailing the various symptoms they suffer.

The Tories’ refusal to acknowledge the true danger of long Covid means research into the causes and treatment of Pims continues only at a low level.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602

Socialist Workers Party meetings



A RUSSIAN tank destroyed in Ukraine

WAR IN UKRAINE

CAMBRIDGE
From WW1 to Vietnam – how
people power has ended war
Wed 4 May, 7.30pm
681-800-4408

SHEFFIELD AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE
Stop the war in Ukraine – what's
the alternative to NATO?
Thu 5 May, 7pm
528-174-9278

CREWE & STOKE-ON-TRENT
Stop the war in Ukraine – what's
the alternative to NATO?
Thu 5 May, 7pm
838-816-0773

NORWICH
From WW1 to Vietnam – how
people power has ended war
Wed 4 May, 7.30pm
906 652 5299

ABERDEEN
Tory attacks on civil
liberties – is Britain
becoming a police state?
Wed 4 May, 7.30pm
894-2628-7708

BIRMINGHAM
No to the Nationality and
Borders Bill – why socialists
oppose all borders
Wed 4 May, 7pm
281-634-5938

BRADFORD
France's presidential
election – is fascism back?
Thu 5 May, 7pm
885-9187-7552

BRIGHTON & HOVE
The shadow of Stalin
Thu 5 May, 6.30pm
818-9286-5617

CARDIFF
Why nuclear power is not
the solution
Wed 4 May, 7.30pm
894-2628-7708

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conversion therapy and
the fight for liberation
Thu 5 May, 7pm
Assembly Rooms, 13/14
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828 532 8731

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What is the socialist answer
to crisis capitalism?
Thu 5 May, 7.30pm
Quaker House, Hyde Park
House, 74 Mutley Plain,
Mutley, PL4 6LF
897-1685-8334

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Decolonising the curriculum
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The Swarthmore Education
Centre, Yorkshire, 2-7
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Reform or revolution –
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31 Dalston Lane E8 3DF
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The Socialist Workers Party continues to hold mostly online meetings during the pandemic. This ensures that there can still be collective and safe discussion, organising and actions. Occasionally branches will hold in-person meetings with precautions taken for a safe environment.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty for news of national online meetings and other updates.

Chivalry—A ‘MeToo comedy’ that’s full of genuine laughs

A satire that takes on the film industry after Me Too risks being either dry or offensive. But, says **Sarah Bates**, this one finds humour in the right places

“SO, WHO do you want to fuck, me or him?”

Pierre’s question to Bobby doesn’t appear to be sincere, but it doesn’t have to be. It’s done its job, and Bobby, (Sarah Solemani) is put firmly in her place.

Pierre’s been hauled in front of Bobby and Cameron O’Neil, (Steve Coogan) to defend the cut of his latest film, which the studio says is offensive to women. So Bobby gets her big break and takes over the project.

Chivalry is billed as a “#MeToo comedy” and the funniest bits come from exploring that.

But it is more than that—Solemani and Coogan are a great double act. There’s enough tension in their relationship for their sniping to be genuinely entertaining.

Chivalry deals with some weighty topics. Take the shifting of power in between characters. Initially, it seems quite clear cut that Cameron is top dog.

Complicated

It’s more complicated though, because Cameron seems genuinely confused with his industry post-MeToo.

Bobby knows the new world—how you should act, what you’re allowed to say and the correct procedures on movie sets.

“I don’t even know what I’m doing here,” she says at one point, after being told Cameron hadn’t acted on complaints against men on sets.

“Neither do I, your film’s overrated,” replies Cameron. It’s a great shot, after he’s spent the best part of several days trying to butter her up.

Bobby is pitched as the outsider—a great feminist hope who can approach the subject matter with



STEVE COOGAN and Sarah Solemani manage the chemistry and tension to pull jokes out of tricky ground

sensitivity and still deliver the goods for the studio.

For anyone, it’s a tightrope. But with an unsure actor, an inexperienced intimacy coach and Cameron hovering around, Bobby becomes nothing short of a bully.

Watching the scene in private where she snarls her teeth at a bit part actor is great. And she comes alive when she senses she’s got Cameron on the run.

Cameron is the butt of the joke

just enough so that you know where the satire is aimed at. And there are some comments from actor Lark, (Sienna Miller) to hint that he could be shadier than he appears.

Chivalry could play it safe and be extremely dry.

Thankfully, there’s enough chemistry between Solemani and Coogan—and enough cracking jokes—to make it work.

Not all of it comes off. The Paul Rudd cameo doesn’t really seem to

make any sense, and Aisling Bea just feels too recognisable for quite a small part.

As far as comedies go, there are few harder subject matters. So it’s extra impressive that Chivalry is actually really funny.

If the first two episodes are anything to go by Chivalry could be one of the sharpest comedies of the year.

Chivalry is on Thursdays, 10pm, Channel 4. First episodes available to watch now on All 4.

A story of freedom and expression through music

FILM

CASABLANCA BEATS

In Curzon cinemas from Friday 29 April

CASABLANCA Beats, directed by Nabil Ayouch, follows a class of young adults learning how to express their discontent with the society they live in through hip hop.

Former rapper Anas travels to a cultural centre in Casablanca, Morocco, to teach music.

He tells his pupils that they must dig deep and

rap about the hardship they have endured in their lives. He tells them how hip hop has always been a music of resistance, and how it became popular during the Tunisian revolution of 2011.

Casablanca Beats could have fallen into an overdone narrative of an inspirational teacher changing the hearts and minds of their pupils.

But it remains fresh because, for large sections of the film, Anas stands back and allows



Joyous rebellion in Casablanca

the young people to learn from each other.

At several points in the film, the viewer becomes a fly on the wall for spirited debates between pupils.

They argue about religion, catcalling and even terrorism. You get the sense that they have never been afforded this before.

Through these arguments, minds change, and the group becomes more confident to rile against the oppression and reaction

in their everyday lives.

By the end of the film, each one of the pupils decides that they cannot accept the world the way it is.

And hip hop, of course, becomes a uniting thread for all of them.

With joyous dance sequences and performances that contrast with the hard lives of its characters, Casablanca Beats is a film about a teacher and his pupils without the usual cheese.

Sophie Squire

PLAY

RED PITCH

Online showings by Bush Theatre, Mon 9 — Sat 14 May. Go to bit.ly/RedPitchBush

RED PITCH, a sharp-edged, powerful story about gentrification and the impact of relentless change in London had its premiere at the Bush Theatre in February.

Once it received both audience and critical acclaim, the production quickly sold out.

Now, having been filmed in front of a specially invited audience of youth groups there is an opportunity to watch the show online. Three



Dreams of football stardom

lifelong friends Omz, Bilal, and Joey are playing football, like they always have, living out dreams of football stardom.

Beyond their football pitch, local shops are closing, and old flats are



Filmed at the Bush theatre

being demolished as new flats shoot up.

Some residents struggle to stay while others rush to leave.

When a small football pitch has been a home from home, a place you’ve laughed, fought, and forged friendships in, what happens when it comes under threat?

Red Pitch-Online will stream worldwide, so you can watch it from anywhere.

Each online performance is a filmed live show that will be streamed to audiences.

The performance will begin promptly at 2.45pm or 7.45pm.

The film will be available to watch on-demand for 48 hours from the date and time selected.

Neoliberal Emmanuel Macron is no block to the advance of fascism.

He defeated Nazi Marine Le Pen by 58.5 percent to 41.5 percent in Sunday's second round of the French presidential election.

But for the third time in 20 years, the National Front—now National Rally—was in the second round of the vote. It had never been so close to winning.

Its vote in the first round of presidential elections has grown from 0.75 percent in 1974 to 23 percent this year.

And this time the filthy far right Islamophobe Eric Zemmour also took 7 percent and, with another far right candidate, their total vote was over 32 percent.

The primary responsibility for the closeness of Sunday's vote lies with Macronism, which has brutalised working class people for five years.

It has been five years of the crushing of the anti-austerity Yellow Vests, the lacerated tents of migrants, the piling up of repressive laws and rounds of attacks on Muslims.

Macron's interior minister Gerald Darmanin, denounced Le Pen as “soft” on Islam.

It's no wonder that on Sunday upwards of 16.5 million people—a record number—abstained, put a blank sheet of paper in the ballot box, or spoiled their vote. That's over a third of registered voters.

In a very worrying normalisation, the shock of a Nazi knocking on the door of the presidential palace has worn off.

In 2002 when Marine's father Jean-Marie Le Pen advanced to the run-off, it was such an earthquake that the conservative Jacques Chirac refused to debate with him.

Millions demonstrated against Le Pen during a fortnight of pulsating activity—mass demonstrations, strikes and student occupations—between the two rounds of that election. Chirac crushed Le Pen by 82 percent to 18 percent in the vote.

Respectfully

Five years ago there was a demonstration of 250,000, as part of the traditional May Day events, when Marine Le Pen advanced to the second round.

Everyone debated respectfully with her, and Macron won by a less comfortable 66 percent to 34 percent. This time, without the May Day boost, anti-racist activists put just tens of thousands on the streets against Le Pen.

There was only token support from the mainstream left and the trade union leaders.

Originally the fascists had a small base largely made up of former military supporters of the colonial war in Algeria.

They grew partly because of disillusionment with the traditional rulers' attacks on ordinary people. But the

decisive element was the accommodation by all the “moderate” political forces—and large parts of the left—to racism, Islamophobia, anti-Roma and anti-migrant policies, and authoritarianism.

In 1991, for example, Chirac, then a former prime minister, said he identified with French workers who were tired of the “smell and noise” of immigrants. Soon afterwards, former right wing president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing warned of an

““

There are glimpses of the potential for a fascist street army

“invasion” of immigrants and backed “citizenship by blood”—restricted to those born of French parents.

A few months later Socialist Party president Francois Mitterrand said France had reached “the threshold of tolerance” on immigration.

These politicians peddling racism were a decade behind the Communist Party. In 1981 the Communist mayor of Vitry near Paris led a bulldozer attack that smashed an immigrants' hostel.

When people criticised the Vitry assault, Georges Marchais, the leader of the Communist Party, headed a demonstration of 10,000 to back it.

We're not being racist, the disgusting party line went, we're simply defending the interests of the French working class.

NO WONDER the fascists grew. In 2004, with support from the right and the Socialist Party, parliament rammed through a ban on wearing headscarves at school.

The centre right, centre left and even sections of the far left argued that Muslim practices were a threat to the “Republic”, to secularism and women's rights.

In the first round of this year's election, the main parties defended a system whose crisis increased unemployment and uncertainty. At the same time as legitimising fascist policies, they fuelled the despair and disillusionment it feeds on.

In his book Marxists In The Face of Fascism, David Beetham writes that the connection between fascism and the mainstream right within a parliamentary system can take two forms—“succession and simultaneous interaction”.

He adds, “Reaction tends to be fuelled, not exhausted, by concessions.

“A different process of interaction takes place where the presence of a fascist movement enables a parliamentary regime to win support for reactionary measures.

“Both forms of connection, successive and reciprocal, were exemplified in Germany between 1929 and 1933”—the rise of Adolf Hitler.

The fascists are advancing in other ways. Traditional fascist strategy requires a street army, initially separate to the state forces, to smash the left and to harass and murder scapegoats such as Jews, Muslims and migrants.

Le Pen does not have that at the moment, but there are glimpses of the potential.

Far right group Generation Z, who are mostly young supporters of Zemmour, have carried out attacks on the left, LGBT+ people and anti-racists. Far right supporters ejected a left wing student occupation last week.

The state machine is also infested with fascist supporters.

A group of retired generals published a declaration last year which threatened an intervention by the army in the face of what they called “the disintegration which strikes the fatherland”.

Five more years of Macron increasing the pension age, attacking benefits, targeting Muslims and confronting working class organisations will give the fascists further opportunities. The warnings are clear.

THE BATTLE between Macron, the president of the rich, and the fascist LePen left many voters cold—record numbers abstained

FRANCE NEEDS A FIGHTBACK TO STOP FASCISTS

Emmanuel Macron has scraped another presidential victory, but the Nazi Le Pen is getting a bigger vote every time. Charlie Kimber says decades of mainstream accommodation to racism is to blame

Nazi Le Pen senior



FOCUS ON WEALTHY

Super-rich Elon Musk is no champion of our free speech

As billionaire Elon Musk sets his sights on buying Twitter, Sam Ord reveals his many crimes

ELON MUSK tries to pose as the “rebel” billionaire, the maverick disrupter who is not like the rest of them. But behind the spliff smoking, leather jacket wearing man who appears on US comedy show SNL, he is the same kind of parasite as the rest.

The chief executive of electric car firm Tesla and space exploration company SpaceX has a personal wealth of £203 billion. He is set to collect a £17.6 billion bonus from Tesla's quarterly profits.

Musk has a particular vision for society, based on opening up the free market—and building a colony on Mars.

He's a tech tycoon, grabbing much of his wealth from the dot-com bubble in the early 2000s. But despite what he would like people to believe, his initial money wasn't self-made.

Money

Musk's father owned a Zambian emerald mine, and once recalled, “We had so much money at times we couldn't even close our safe.”

Zambia suffered at the hands of exploitative bosses like Musk senior, who exported masses of natural resources whilst paying poverty wages.

Musk junior has built on his inherited wealth by tax avoidance and restricting workers' conditions.

According to a ProPublica investigation, he paid a real tax rate of under 3.3 percent from 2014 to 2018.

And for his immense wealth workers have suffered. Tesla workers at the Fremont factory in California, US, are seriously injured at a rate that's double the industry average, according to Worksafe in 2015.

Worker Jose Moran said, “The hard, manual labour we put in to make Tesla successful is done at great risk to our bodies. “Preventable injuries

the anti-austerity Yellow Vests fought on the right battleground

Rise of the right shows they must be always be challenged

THE FAILURES of the left are the other side of the fascists' rise.

One obvious mistake was not to clearly identify Jean-Marie and then Marine Le Pen as Nazis, rather than simply “just another right wing party”.

It would then follow that all working class organisations should unite in action to propagandise and organise against the fascists, break up their meetings and confront them in the streets.

When, in the 1980s and 1990s, anti-racists did mobilise in large numbers, it was seen as merely an auxiliary to the Socialist Party's campaign.

But the equivalent of the Labour Party betrayed its supporters when it ruled in recent decades and has now virtually disappeared. It took just 1.74 percent of the vote two weeks ago.

Its rule for the rich propelled millions of working class people into accepting the fascists' lies.

Now there is a huge responsibility on left wing challenger Jean-Luc Melenchon who won 22 percent in the first round of the presidential vote, just 420,000 behind Le Pen. He pulled big numbers

of working class people in the big cities behind him, with queues to vote for him in some areas. And 69 percent of Muslims who voted backed him.

This force could have been mobilised in mass demonstrations.

Melenchon could have said, whoever wins on Sunday, take to the streets, don't go to work on Monday, make it a day to signal that you won't bow down to the fascist or the banker.

Instead Melenchon remains utterly fixated on elections.

Seeking

He has called on voters to make him prime minister in the legislative elections in June and is seeking an electoral pact with the Communists, the Greens and the NPA far left party.

Such manoeuvres won't be a barrier to the far right.

The crucial battleground in the next five years will be in the workplaces and the streets.

It will mean building on the Yellow Vest movement, the 2019 strikes against pension attacks, the women's, environmental and anti-racism movements.

Such struggles have to be a basis for the political challenge to all the traditional forces.



Jean-Luc Melenchon (top) is still focused on elections. A protester in Paris declares 'Neither Macron nor Marine' (above)

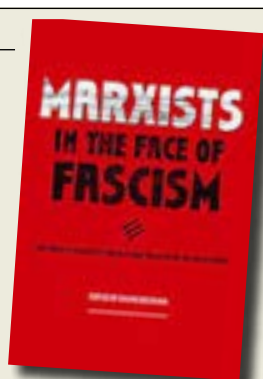
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““

It is clear that if he does manage to buy Twitter, it will only benefit him

BILLIONAIRE ELON Musk

happen often. Add a shortage of manpower and a constant push to work faster to meet production goals, and injuries are bound to happen.”

Low pay and unsafe conditions pushed Jose and some co-workers to try and build a trade union. He claims Tesla bosses made this difficult.

“Every worker was required to sign a confidentiality policy that threatens consequences if we exercise our right to speak out about wages and working conditions,” he said. Safety became an issue at Tesla in 2020 during the height of the Covid pandemic.

Musk initially kept his Fremont factory open despite a “shelter in place” order. He also claimed that children “are essentially immune” to Covid.

Other Tesla employees also experience racist and sexist abuse.

Around 100 former workers said Tesla discriminates against black workers and “allows a racist environment”.

Seven women workers said they faced sexual harassment

last year whilst accusing Tesla of facilitating a culture of sexual harassment.

They criticised Musk's remarks about women's bodies and dismissive attitudes regarding reports of sexual harassment.

Other employees say Musk had “unpredictable rages” and warned new employees not to pass his desk to avoid being unexpectedly fired.

Protected

Now Musk wants to buy social media company Twitter. He says that free speech on the platform will be protected under his leadership.

Musk likely wants Twitter to accumulate wealth, direct what's talked about, harvest data and benefit from movements on stock and cryptocurrency markets.

If he does manage to buy Twitter, it will only benefit him and the section of ruling class he stands up for.

Currently a tiny group of people in Silicon Valley decide what is and isn't allowed.

At the push of a button, they can silence their political opponents.

If Musk succeeds in grabbing control of the company, he would be able to silence those that speak out on the platform against him and his class.

Don't let Musk fool you into thinking that he will disrupt the system that has been the source of his obscene wealth.

On the contrary everything this billionaire does is an attempt to maintain it.

Liverpool councillors break from Labour Party

by NICK CLARK

FIVE COUNCILLORS in Liverpool have broken from the Labour Party to form an independent group after refusing to vote for cuts.

The big question now is what the group will do to challenge the Labour council.

Councillors Alison Clarke, Joanne Calvert, Alan Gibbons, Rona Heron and Alfie Hincks were among seven councillors who defied Labour Party instructions to vote for cuts.

The Labour-run council's budget, approved in February, included cuts to adult social care, charges for green waste collection and a 3 percent council tax increase.

The party suspended the five, along with councillors George Knibb and Lindsey Melia, for voting against it.

Knibb then left Labour and Melia quit as a councillor. The other five say they'd heard nothing from Labour on what it would do about their decision to rebel.

They warned they would quit if the party hadn't

responded by Tuesday of last week.

They are now joining three other former Labour councillors, Sam Gorst, Sarah Morton and Anna Rothery to form an independent opposition group.

Gibbons, who was expelled from Labour last Monday for supposedly supporting a banned group, suggested he didn't want to leave the party.

"I don't think any of us wanted to be in this position," he said. "We all started in the Labour Party, inspired by the vision of a mass member-led democratic socialist movement. Those are still our values."

But Gorst told the LiverpoolWorld website he was "delighted" that the councillors had split from Labour. "These community driven people, like myself, were once dedicated to the Labour Party," he said.

"Sadly, the party has changed beyond recognition and displaced some great people through selection rigging, anti-democratic actions and a discriminatory whipping system.

"We must now scrutinise the continuous poor decision making of the mayor and cabinet and ensure more democracy is injected into Liverpool's local politics ensuring the most vulnerable are looked after."

And Hincks told BBC Radio Merseyside the new group will be "an opportunity to form a group to start putting pressure on the council to start listening."

In fact, the split should be an opportunity to do much more than that. It not only raises a challenge to the Labour Party of Keir Starmer, but to its commitment to running councils "responsibly" and within the law.

Balanced

After passing the budget, Liverpool's mayor Joanne Anderson told the Liverpool Echo newspaper that Labour's rules bind its councillors to voting for cuts.

"Councillors know when they join the Labour Party they will have to vote for a balanced budget. It's all in the rules and they are all aware of the consequences," she said.

Even under left wing Labour's Jeremy Corbyn, Labour councils effectively continued managing Tory austerity. Its then shadow chancellor John McDonnell promised in 2015 to launch a national campaign against council cuts.

But by December 2015—months after he was first elected leader—Corbyn told councils not to set what were deemed illegal no-cuts budgets. That led to strikes against cuts at some Labour councils—including by bin workers and care workers in Birmingham—in which Corbyn and McDonnell didn't intervene.

The Liverpool councillors could launch a much more serious challenge that extends beyond speeches and votes in the council chamber.

For a start, they could call a demonstration against the council's planned cuts. They could also work with trade unionists at the council to encourage strikes and resistance among the workers on the receiving end.

But doing that effectively means a renewed focus on building mass movements

against cuts and the cost of living crisis. And these have to be free of the stultifying confines of the Labour Party—and Labourism.

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Take no pride in Britain's brutal immigration history

The Tories' plans to send refugees to Rwanda is another example of how the state treats migrants. **Socialist Worker** tells the bloody history of Britain's borders

FROM ALLOWING Jewish people to die at the hands of the Nazis to drownings in the Channel, Boris Johnson is wrong to claim that Britain has "a proud history" of welcoming people.

The Tories have a long-term mission to scapegoat migrants for the problems in society. That's particularly useful now as Johnson teeters on the edge of removal from Downing Street.

As he announced the plans to deport refugees to Rwanda for "processing", Johnson said, without a hint of irony, "Our Britain is a beacon of openness and generosity."

But the real record is saturated in blood.

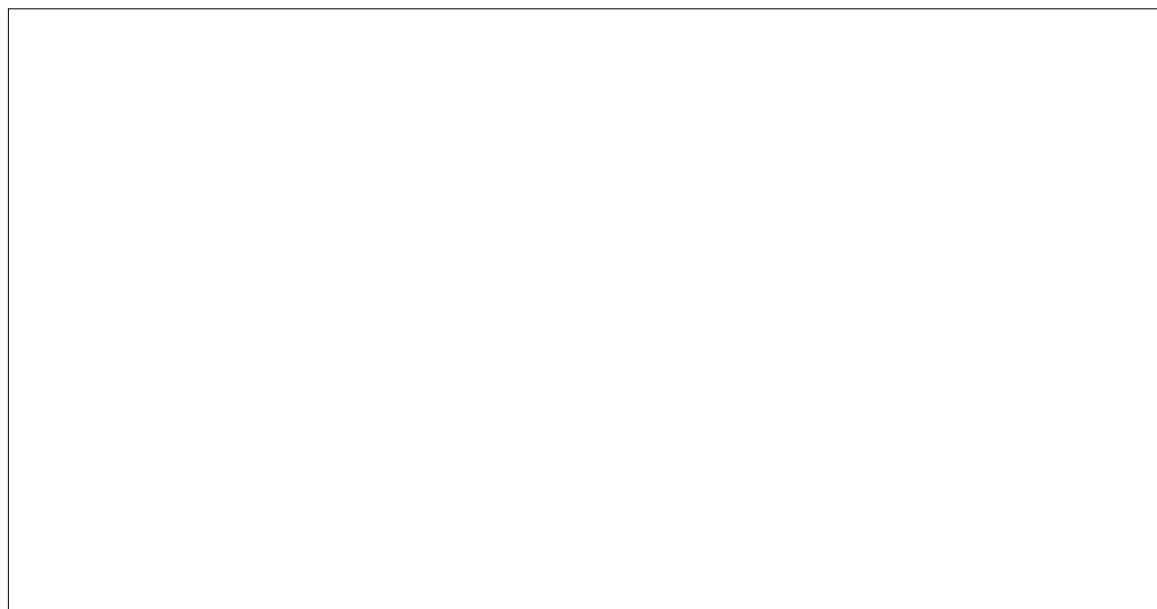
Around 400,000 Irish people settled in Britain in the 1840s after a famine that was a result of British colonialism.

They were met with widespread anti-Irish prejudice from the top of society. Irish people were barred from housing and employment. But the prejudices also dripped down wards, resulting in racist attacks.

In the early 1900s Jewish people in eastern European were subject to pogroms and thousands saw their homes destroyed and family killed.

But when they tried to escape to Britain, the ruling class branded them "criminals".

MPs brought in Britain's first immigration controls—the Aliens



TORY RACIST Enoch Powell reflected the racism of his class

Act 1905. It was specifically directed against Jews. It defined some migrants—mostly the poor and mentally ill—as "undesirable".

When the Nazis invaded Austria in 1932, and Jewish people there fled, more immigration controls were announced.

Britain reluctantly accepted just 9,354 unaccompanied children as refugees. Tory prime minister Neville Chamberlain said, "I

don't care a damn about the Jews." From 600,000 received visa applications, just 70,000 refugees were accepted.

Italy declared war on Britain in June 1940 and Winston Churchill ordered police to "collar the lot". That meant internment all Italians.

Racist and sectarian groups followed his lead and attacked over 4,000 Italian migrants.

The elite has only ever helped

refugees when suits their interests or when pressured from below.

The British Nationality Act 1948 allowed all citizens of the British Empire to live and work in Britain without a visa. The intention was they would fill gaps in the labour market.

Commonwealth migration rose from a trickle in the early 1950s to more than 100,000 a year by the early 1960s.

But rather than being welcomed by the "mother country" they were met with official disdain and widespread racism. Politicians of all parties used migrants as a scapegoat for poor housing and low pay.

This rhetoric developed the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, which forced some migrants to "return to their own countries".

Rabid racist, Enoch Powell incited violence against migrants. His Rivers of Blood speech in 1968 outlined the myth of what's now "the great replacement" theory.

By 1972 only those holding a work permit or with parents or grandparents born in Britain could enter.

In mid-1970s the Wilson and Callaghan Labour government forced women from south Asia coming to Britain to marry to undergo virginity tests.

Laws have continually been tightened to make it harder for people to move to Britain.

The result today is people dying trying to escape war, poverty, climate change and hunger.

There is nothing to celebrate about Britain's immigration controls.

On other pages...
Elon Musk is no friend of free speech >>>Page 15

Refugees deported to country where dissent is drowned in blood

DEPORTING refugees to Rwanda is another example of how imperialist powers work with the most reactionary governments in the Global South.

Between April and July 1994, some 800,000 people were slaughtered in Rwanda, mainly from the Tutsi minority group.

The genocide was launched by a government that worked closely with the West, particularly France.

The aftermath of the genocide saw the installation of the brutally repressive regime of Paul Kagame from the Tutsi-led forces that defeated the genocide-supporting regime.

After such horrors it had a wave of

international sympathy. But Kagame has ruled Rwanda for 27 years in the most undemocratic way, ruthlessly suppressing opposition.

And that attitude extends to refugees.

In 2018 Rwandan security forces shot dead at least 12 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo when they protested against a cut to food rations.

Authorities arrested and prosecuted over 60 of them on charges including "spreading false information with intent to create a hostile international opinion against the Rwandan state".

These same laws could be used against the people Britain now



Paul Kagame's (centre) repressive regime sells itself to the West

wants to pluck from south coast beaches and dump in Africa.

Human Rights Watch says, "Rwanda has a known track record of extra-judicial killings, suspicious

deaths in custody, unlawful or arbitrary detention, torture, and abusive prosecutions, particularly targeting critics and dissidents.

In fact Britain directly raised its concerns

about respect for human rights with Rwanda, and grants asylum to Rwandans who have fled the country, including four just last year."

That record has never troubled Kagame's Western backers.

Rwanda has a powerful state-directed industry and acts as a centre for the export of minerals and gemstones.

Its army also can act as the cop of the region.

For a long time Kagame, while repulsing France, became close to Britain and the United States.

But more recently it has moved heavily towards China which has invested to extend its influence in Africa.

In response Britain

and France have tried to pull Rwanda back into their orbit.

The latest pact is an example of this.

The Tories previously considered sending migrants and refugees to decommissioned oil platforms in the North Sea and old ferries off the British coastline.

Then they looked at countries including Ghana and Albania as well as British colonial outposts Gibraltar and Ascension Island.

Their final choice is a poor African country with a record of repression.

They buy it off with a few million pounds to act as an agent for the ejection of unwanted human beings from Britain.

IN BRIEF

Bearing down in struggle for pay

STRIKERS AT car bearing manufacturers NSK Bearings and AKS Precision Ball in Peterlee, County Durham, are escalating their fight over pay. Some 200 Unite union members took eight days of industrial action starting on 23 March over a 1.6 percent pay offer. Workers are now striking for a further 11 days, starting from last Wednesday until 15 May. The strikes include the entire shopfloor workforce.

GSK workers could walk for first time

WORKERS AT pharmaceutical giant GSK have voted to strike for the first time ever. The workers voted 86 percent yes in favour of strikes after a 2.75 percent pay offer. The RPI inflation rate is 9 percent. The workers' Unite union said GSK should improve its offer or it will announce strike days. Unite union general secretary Sharon Graham said, "GSK pocketed more than £34 billion in profits last year yet expects its workforce to swallow a pay cut in the midst of a cost of living crisis."

Showing their mettle in Hereford

WORKERS AT a metal company, in Hereford will vote to strike after bosses offered them a measly 2 percent pay rise. Members of the GMB union are angry that bosses are cutting their real pay. But Special Metals management have said they won't negotiate. Workers will vote on whether to strike from 6 May.

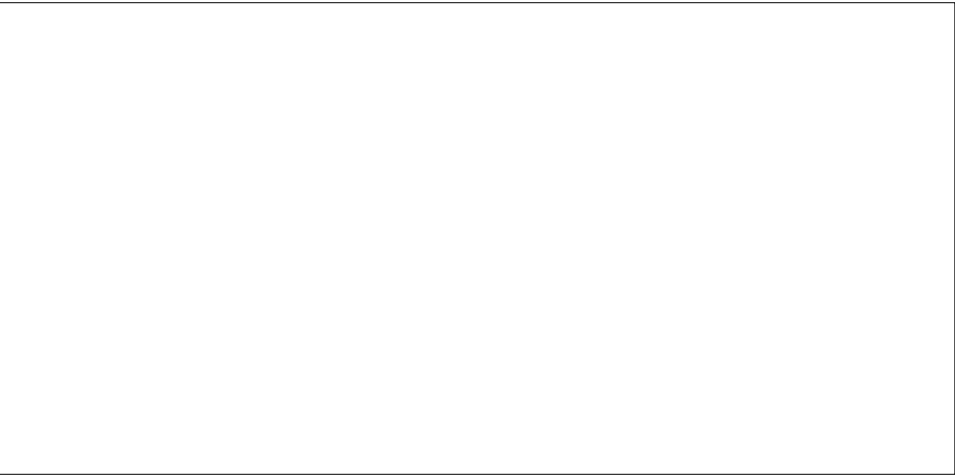
Threat of Mini strikes brings offer

STRIKES BY warehouse workers at the Mini plant in Oxford have been postponed after bosses at Rudolph & Hellman put forward a new offer. The Unite union has suspended strikes for this week and next while the 180 workers vote on the deal. If they reject the offer, strikes will go ahead on 10, 12, 17 and 19 May.

Airbus workers celebrating pay win

OVER 3,000 workers employed by Airbus at its North Wales and Gloucestershire plants have accepted an improved pay offer. Strikes were voted on in February but suspended while an offer was considered. The new deal includes an 8.6 percent pay increase over 13 months and a backdated 5.1 percent lump sum payment and additional holiday days in 2023 and 2024.

UNIVERSITIES



RALLYING FOR victory in Dundee

PICTURE: ARTHUR NICOLL

Dundee workers strike for 'retirement dignity'

by SARAH BATES

HUNDREDS OF low paid workers at Dundee University are striking back against fat cat bosses who are viciously attacking their pensions. Some 300 workers at rounded off a week-long strike last Friday. And from this Monday week different sections of workers are set to strike over the next three weeks in a rolling programme of action. The Unison union members are fighting to stop the closure of their pension, and being forced to take up a new scheme that would slash their money by thousands.

They've been fighting since March 2021, and workers already struck for a week in November of last year. Unison rep and strike Emma Preston told Socialist Worker that university management "thought we'd roll over". "People are very angry and they're doing this so they can hold our heads up high," she said.

Workers received notice 13 months ago that their current pension deal was set to close—and bosses only set out a five week consultation. But since then Unison members have been organising to beat them back. It's a vicious attack. And it only affects workers who are the lowest paid, on grades one to six. The university's principal has a salary of £250,000 a year, and his management team are raking in wages of £130-180,000.

Worse

Yet strikers, some on the minimum wage, are being told by management they should accept a worse deal because they can rely on state pensions in retirement. As well as their pension being worth less, the university wants to force workers to work until they are 68 years old. And bosses will be closing the scheme to new members. It's an attack that will hit the lowest paid on campus, such as

cleaners, security guards, post workers and secretaries. The new deal means if a worker is expecting to receive an annual pension of £11,000, this could now be slashed to as little as £7,000. "It's about fighting for a dignified retirement. People are genuinely worried about their retirement," said Emma. "People are now at the point where they just don't believe they'll be OK." Workers have rallied outside the university every morning of the strike, and it's seen the union branch and picket lines grow as a result of the dispute. Emma said workers should look to the example of the Glasgow equal pay dispute, where council bosses rolled out a sexist pay structure. "The main people affected by these changes are women," she said. Bosses in the education sector will be looking closely at Dundee—and a victory for them could see attacks on their workers' pensions in future.

TRANSPORT

Whopper train ballot opens

BOSSSES COULD face the "biggest rail strike in modern British history" in June across 15 train operating companies. The RMT union is balloting 40,000 rail workers. Network Rail wants to axe 2,500 jobs as part of a £2 billion package of cuts while workers at train operators have suffered pay freezes and changes to conditions. Daniel Kennedy, an RMT workplace rep in Birmingham, told Socialist Worker, "In my workplace we are hoping for about an 80 percent yes vote. "Very few of us have ever struck before, but there's a strong mood." The ballot opened on Tuesday and closes 24 May. Daniel outlined how workload, inflation and the chaos of Covid are piling pressure onto rail workers. "Workload is very mixed, on a full timetable it's incredibly busy," he said. "Covid dropped the numbers off but it's picking up steadily. I'd say we're almost back to pre-Covid levels." Daniel said that rail

Services are getting busy

workers are essential and it only takes a small group of workers to shut down the entire network. He hopes bosses will understand that the strike threat is severe and they will get back round the negotiating table with the government. But if the ballot passes "I don't think the RMT should or would delay calling strike dates". RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said, "Removing 2,500 safety critical jobs from Network Rail will spell disaster for the public, make accidents more likely and will increase the possibility of trains flying off the tracks." RMT union members should vote yes for strikes. A huge rail strike could become a focal point for resistance to the Tories and the bosses.

BUSES

Glasgow workers to walk

DOZENS OF bus workers at First Glasgow have voted overwhelmingly to strike for pay. Around 60 First Glasgow bus cleaners and shunters voted 96 percent in support of strikes on an 87 percent turnout. Two 48-hour strikes are set to take place from 4 May and 18 May. Bosses have offered workers a two-year pay deal which would take some workers to £9.48 per hour backdated from August 2021 to April 2022. The minimum wage

First Glasgow

currently stands at £9.50 per hour. Workers should get ready to take to the picket lines against poverty pay.

EDUCATION

Waltham Forest walkouts

WORKERS IN two schools in Waltham Forest, north east London, kicked off their latest round of strikes this week. Strikers at Walthamstow Primary Academy and Connaught School for Girls launched a three-day walkout from Tuesday. At Walthamstow Primary Academy, workers are fighting poor conditions, a bullying culture from management and an unsustainable workload. Strikers also say that teachers aren't being paid the correct wage. Workers initially struck for a three

day period from 24 March, which triggered over 500 people to sign a petition supporting them. Meanwhile at Connaught School for Girls cleaners are battling a threatened privatisation of their service. Workers' contracts could be slashed by nine working weeks, meaning a cut of two months' pay for low paid cleaners. They are also set to lose access to the local government pension scheme. ●Messages of support for both to paul.phillips@neu.org.uk and sandra.faria@neu.org.uk

A strike against oppression

WORKERS AT John Fisher School in Croydon, south London, were set to strike from Thursday this week against anti-LGBT+ bigotry. The action follows the Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark preventing Simon James Green, a gay author, from speaking at the school. The Archdiocese also removed those school governors that protested. It is important that NEU members are prepared to strike in order to show that schools—regardless of their religious alignment—should be inclusive spaces for all. ●Send messages of support to s.carquez@johnfisherschool.org

UCU

Delegates argue for action at special uni conferences

THE UCU union held the first of two special Higher Education Sector Conferences (Shescs) last week over the pay and conditions (four fights) dispute. This week delegates will discuss the pension dispute. General secretary Jo Grady has been active in seeking to have the two disputes called off with any talk of a serious fight postponed until 2023. It is crucial delegates to the two Shescs vote

for motions supporting escalating action to ensure the disputes are not sold out. If UCU retreats and accepts the general secretary's plan, the officials will be responsible for leaving members to lose their pensions and suffer major cuts to pay in the middle of a cost of living crisis. Many activists will be asking now whether we can take things forward under the current general secretary. Carlo Morelli

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY

Hackney council sees workers revolt on pay

MORE than 200 east London council workers struck over pay from Monday to Wednesday this week.

They work in Hackney's refuse, building services and passenger services for those with disabilities and special educational needs.

Strikers are fighting the local implementation of the paltry 1.75 percent pay rise decreed nationally by the Local Government Association (LGA).

The workers want Hackney council bosses to agree at least a 10 percent raise.

At the Millfields Road bins depot, pickets and supporters gathered from 5am on Monday in an effort to win support from members of other unions who had not been called out on strike.

A striker told Socialist Worker, "Some did not go through the picket and we thank them."

"But the management put relentless pressure on others and particularly the agency workers who are looking for full time work."

"We need to keep up the argument and the pickets because this strike is for all council workers."



STRIKERS AND their supporters picketing on Monday

PICTURE: HACKNEY SWP

Workers in Unison were balloted for strikes but didn't reach the threshold under the anti-union laws, and GMB union workers weren't balloted at all.

On Thursday last week around 150 council workers and their supporters gathered on the steps of Hackney town hall for a rally to prepare for the action.

Claire, who was soon to be on strike, told Socialist Worker, "The pay deal we've

been offered isn't good enough when all workers feel the squeeze. People can't afford food now and are forced to look for second jobs."

Speakers from the Hackney branch of the NEU union, Hackney trades council and the Homerton hospital branch of the Unison union gave messages of solidarity.

At the rally workers held up signs that read, "We are in this together" and "We demand 10 percent now."

John, a council electrician and the strike convenor told Socialist Worker, "What we have been offered nationally is a pay cut, a pay cut of 6.25 percent."

We know the council has the budget to pay workers properly, but they choose not to."

Further action is planned from Tuesday to Thursday next week.

● Tweet messages of support to @UniteLondonEast

REFUSE

Coventry bin strikers demand more action

by RICHARD MILNER

THE COVENTRY council bin strike is one of the longest running local authority disputes in the Unite union's history.

It has been lengthened by the council's major scabbing operation through the Tom White Waste company that it fully owns.

Now a note from Tom White Waste to its business customers admits to increasing HGV2 drivers' wages by 12 percent. The council won't do that for its own workforce.

The council is spending ten times more on agency staff to break the strike than it would cost to settle it.

War

Unite union leader Sharon Graham has been clear on saying that the Labour-run council is "waging war on our union". She suspended the Unite membership of every Unite Coventry Labour councillor.

But this isn't enough. Even the tiny number of Labour councillors who voted to donate money from a Unite branch to the bin strikers have failed to speak out publicly against the council's actions.

Strikers are frustrated with the support from most regional officials. This is the biggest strike in the region.

Yet the union has not mobilised its regional activists to visit the picket line or

campaign to get activists to raise funds for the strike.

It is overwhelmingly organisers from the organising department who are seen on the picket line, not representatives from the region.

It is clear that a section of the regional bureaucracy seems uncomfortable with a strike against a Labour council, which is seen as disrupting Unite's relationship with Labour.

The strikers took action to get a fair wage, so it is the Labour council who have disrupted Unite's relationship with Labour by its actions.

The interests of the members must come well before worrying about the union's relationship with a strike-busting Labour.

Socialists and trade unionists need to redouble efforts to get behind this strike.

If possible they should attend the rally in Coventry next Tuesday.

But every socialist should be pushing for solidarity donations from their trade union and political branch.

● Solidarity march Tue 3 May, 11am, assemble 1 Friargate, CV1 2GN to end at Coventry Council House, CV1 5RR

● Support the strike: Coventry bin workers' strike fund: Unity Trust Bank a/c Unite WM/7116 Branch Coventry Local Government, Sort code: 60-83-01, a/c number: 20302665. Messages of support to **Pete. Randle@uniteunion.org**

BIN WORKERS

Win at Adur & Worthing shows strikes get results

STRONG STRIKES have led to success for refuse workers at Adur and Worthing council.

The members of the GMB union, who have been striking since February, voted to accept a revised pay deal on Thursday of last week.

Refuse loaders will now receive an 8.2 percent pay rise, cleansing drivers will receive an extra 10.4 percent, and HGV drivers will see their pay packet increase by 20.7 percent.

The council has also vowed to conduct a review of the job roles of HGV drivers. The GMB has warned that workers will strike again if the council does not uphold this deal.

After almost 30 days of strikers refuse workers have stood up to the actions of nasty Tory councillors who sought to break the strikes from the beginning.

This victory shows that lively picket lines and strong strikes can win a better deal for refuse workers.

■ REFUSE WORKERS for Wealden district council in Sussex have paused their strike after the council offered them a revised pay deal.

The members of the GMB union planned to begin strikes on Monday.

The deal, from outsourcer Biffa, fell short of what workers had demanded. But strikes were still called off so workers could consider their next steps.

Workers should strike for a much better deal.

■ GROUND maintenance workers for Croydon council, in south London, have suspended strikes after a new offer on pay and conditions.

MANCHESTER

Biffa battle

OVER 200 workers—drivers, loaders and environmental operatives—employed by Biffa on the outsourced Manchester council refuse collection contract are set for strikes over pay.

They are scheduled to strike for two weeks from next Tuesday until 13 May.

Then more strikes are planned from Monday 23 May until Friday 3 June.

Biffa is offering the workers, including GMB and Unite union members, just 1.75 percent on pay, a real terms pay cut.

The first period of strikes coincides with the local elections on 5 May.

The second period of industrial action corresponds with the queen's platinum jubilee.

Biffa's bosses have plenty of cash to pay for a 10 percent pay rise or more.

It recorded bumper pre-tax profits of over £26 million last year,

KINDER SCOUT

Anti-racist rambling

HUNDREDS OF ramblers scaled Kinder Scout last Sunday to mark the 90th anniversary of a historic trespass and demand the right to roam today.

The Kinder in Colour event marked the original Kinder Scout trespass in 1932 and called for an end to the barriers that prevent countryside access.

"It's a huge postcode lottery so 92 percent of the countryside is locked away, you cannot roam, you cannot wander," said Nadia Shaikh.

They gathered in Edale village to listen to speakers before ascending the peak. Walkers spoke about how racism left many people feel they weren't welcome in the countryside.

"Less than 1 percent of visitors to national parks are Bame (black and minority ethnic) and that's just not good enough," said co-organiser Sam Siva.

ROUND-UP

Further battles on pay

TRAFFIC WARDENS in Wiltshire were set to strike after the council threatened pay cuts of up to 20 percent by removing unsocial hours supplements.

The members of the GMB union voted 100 percent in favour of strikes on 92 percent turnout.

■ PORTERS AND domestics at two south London hospitals have voted overwhelmingly for strikes in an indicative ballot.

The NHS workers are employed by hated outsourcing firms Mitie and Sodexo. Bosses want to keep pay low and worsen terms and conditions.

The GMB union members will now move to a formal industrial action ballot.

GMB organiser Helen O'Connor said, "At Queen Mary's hospital Sodexo is making eye watering cuts, while Mitie continues to weaken the pay, terms and conditions of domestics

in St George's Hospital at every single opportunity."

■ FOUR WORKERS at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (Lshmt) who protested for fair pay have been suspended from their jobs.

Cleaners, porters and security staff are currently outsourced to several different companies by Lshmt.

The university has vowed to bring workers in house by August this year but will not employ them on the same pay scale as those working directly for the university.

Workers will be paid £11.05 an hour, meaning they will be paid less than those on the lowest rung of the universities' pay structure.

The IWGB union has called on supporters to raise awareness about the nasty tactics Lshmt is using.

● Sign the support petition at bit.ly/IWGBatTropical

IS PARTY OVER FOR BORIS JOHNSON?

by SARAH BATES

AS MUCH as Boris Johnson would like to believe otherwise, the hangover from the Downing Street booze ups of 2020 hasn't subsided.

His position is looking increasingly uncertain as even some Tories are publicly baying for Johnson's blood.

Former Brexit minister Steve Baker said that the Tories would "reap the whirlwind" of Partygate in the local elections on 5 May.

"The prime minister should be long gone," he added.

Another former cabinet minister said doubts over the succession were now irrelevant, such was the urgency of the situation. "A broomstick would be better," he said.

"I have absolutely nothing, frankly, to hide," Johnson declared last week.

But after he spent two years denying partying during strict lockdown, few would believe him.

And the revelations keep coming.

Johnson admitted last Friday that he attended a

BORIS JOHNSON visited India last week—and found time to visit a Tory donor's firm (see page 2) PICTURE: NUMBER 10

"bring your own booze" party in the Downing Street gardens in May 2020.

But the denial continues, claiming that he "believed implicitly that this was a work event".

Senior Tories were last week scrambling to find a way

to block Labour leader Keir Starmer's calls for an inquiry, but backed off after Labour added an amendment saying the inquiry could take place after the next phase of the Grey report had been released.

Many Tories are terrified that public anger over

Johnson's lies could cost the party at the local elections.

The Met police have said it won't make any public announcements about fines for rule breaking parties until after polling day.

But with claims circulating that the cops are investigating

five further parties Johnson was at, he is far from out of the woods yet.

A devastating result for the Tories next week could be the final blow for slippery Johnson. If he doesn't go willingly, pressure should mount to push him out.

Sunak dines with the elite

CHANCELLOR Rishi Sunak is taking time out from dealing with the scandal caused by his dodgy tax affairs to host a fundraising banquet for bankers.

Sunak will be schmoozing the rich at a dinner, where it costs £10,000 to buy a ten seat table.

Guests will be stumping up £1,000 each for a seat—which is helpfully under the £7,500 threshold for

Rishi Sunak

declaring party political donations.

It's therefore likely that guests will be buying individual tickets at £1,000 a seat, so they're not forced to declare the purchase.

In yet another blow for Sunak's career, he polled at the bottom of the popularity chart compiled by the Conservative Home website.

He scored minus 5.2—even lower than embattled prime minister Boris Johnson.

Rees Mogg's deadly back to workplaces drive

NEVER ONE to miss an opportunity to grab a headline, Jacob Rees Mogg is trying to force civil servants back into the office.

He's campaigning for government workers to return to Westminster, and left notes on empty desks saying, "Sorry you were out when I visited".

Desperate

It's a desperate piece of political theatre. And it's part of a plan to position himself at the top of the Tories, at a time when others are floundering.

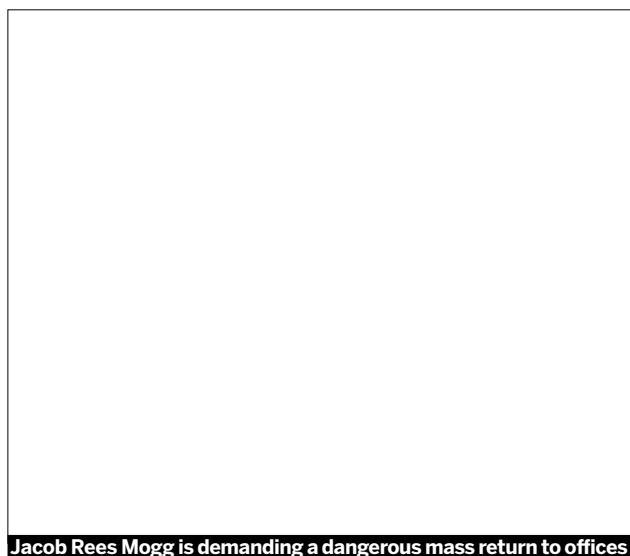
Rees Mogg, who last month called on

chancellor Rishi Sunak to lower taxes, said civil servants working from home was a "bad deal for taxpayers".

And he represents a large section of the rich who would like to pretend that the pandemic is over, despite that far from being the case.

The latest figures reveal that in the seven days leading up to 22 April, some 185,625 people tested positive for Covid-19. Some 1,956 people died.

His pushback into the office is nothing short of a political stunt that could cost lives.



Jacob Rees Mogg is demanding a dangerous mass return to offices

Rayner suffers sexism from Tories and their allies

ANGELA RAYNER, deputy Labour leader, faced familiar sexist abuse from the right wing press on Sunday.

The Mail on Sunday newspaper reported that Tory MPs claimed Rayner liked distracting Johnson by crossing and uncrossing her legs during Prime Minister's Questions.

As well as vile sexism, it reeked of a snobbishness of the establishment, who have regularly sneered at Rayner.

One Tory said, "She

knows she can't compete with Boris's Oxford Union debating training, but she has other skills which he lacks.

"She has admitted as much when enjoying drinks with us on the terrace."

It talked of how "flirty exchanges" took place between "the comprehensive school-educated Labour MP against the Old Etonian".

It's a reminder that no woman is exempt from the sexist filth of the media.